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Essays in
Honour of
Jawaharlal
Handoo

Edited by
Udaya Narayana Singh

Culturation

Central Institute of Indian Languages
Publication No. 487

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JAWAHARLAL HANDOO

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Central Institute of Indian Languages
Mysore, India

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Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo

Born on July 01, 1941 at Srinagar in Jammu & Kashmir **Jawaharlal Handoo** had his college education in his native state and received his Doctoral Degree from Kurukshetra University. He was a Senior Fellow of U.G.C. in the same University before he began his career as a Lecturer in Kashmiri in the Northern Regional Language Centre, Patiala of the Central Institute of Indian Languages. In 1972, he took over as the head of the Folklore Unit in the Institute. He is involved in the folkloristic studies and has not only carved a niche for himself but also has placed the Institute in the international scene as a Center for Advanced Studies in Folklore.

As a folklorist, Dr. Handoo has more than 20 books to his credit. To mention a few : *Folktales of India*, *Folklore in the Changing World*, *The Epic: Oral and Written*, *Folklore: An Introduction* and *Current Trends in Folklore*. He has also authored more than 50 important research papers on various aspects of Folklore and most of these have been published in reputed journals and books edited by renowned scholars.

As an internationally renowned scholar, Dr. Handoo is associated with many reputed scholars like Drs. Peter J. Claus, Lucian Miller, Richard Wolf and Leela Prasad. He has visited Universities of various countries such as Indiana University, California State University, Hayward University, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (Canada), University of Helsinki, University of Turku and Abu Academy (Finland), University of Stockholm and University of Uppsala, (Sweden), University of Oslo, and University of Bergen (Norway), University of Rajshahi, University of Dhaka and Bangla Academy in Bangla Desh, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, (U.K.) and Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, (Mauritius) besides Indian Universities.

Dr. Handoo has been honoured with several awards, fellowships and grants for his contributions to the study of Folklore. These include: First Subsidy Award from Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, National Award (First Category) for Kashmiri and Hindi Folksongs and 3 year Doctoral Fellowship from the then Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 3 year Post-Doctoral UGC Senior Fellowship from the University Grants Commission and Doctor of Philosophy (honoris causa), Academy of Folklore, Calcutta.

Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo is a member of many learned bodies and societies in various capacities. He is the President of Indian Folklore

Congress since 1986 and Vice-President, International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) since 1995. He is an Invited Full Member, Folklore Fellows, Academy of Science and Letters, Finland since 1990; Member Advisory Committee, Folklore Fellow Summer Schools, Turku, Finland since 1991; Member Advisory Committee, International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), Germany since 1989; Member, World Archaeological Congress, U.K. since 1986; He is the editor of *Journal of Indian Folkloristics* since 1978; Member Editorial Board, *PILC Journal of Dravidic Studies*, Pondicherry since 1991; International Corresponding Editor, *Journal of Folklore Research*, Indiana University, U.S.A. since 1983; International Corresponding Editor, *Journal of Cultural Analysis*, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A. since 1999; and Member International Editorial Board, *Folklore*, London since 2000.

He was a Member Commission on Folklore Theory (ISFNR) from 1984-1989; Review Editor, *Current Anthropology*, B.C., Canada from 1980-1983; Secretary, Place Name Society of India, Mysore from 1983 to 1984; and Editorial Adviser, *Encyclopedia of Karnataka Folk Culture*, Madras from 1989-1990. He was instrumental in bringing the XI ISFNR Congress from outside Europe for the first time to India, which was jointly organized by the CIIL, Mysore and ISFNR in 1995. It was a landmark in the history of Folklore research and became the *Mysore Congress*.

Besides these achievements, Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo has ensured the sustained flowering of the discipline by inspiring and initiating many young scholars into Folklore. This volume is a tribute to Dr. Handoo to celebrate his contributions to the discipline of Folklore.

Foreword

In the history of knowledge formation and knowledge-generation, disciplines – often quite hostile to one another - have been found to be converging. Such confluences are more evident at the present moment. In the borderlines of such largely overlapping fields lie those who give birth to new approaches to the study of *man* and *nature* – two most unexplained and inexplicable results of a certain kind of creativity. As students standing at cross-roads, we soon realize that events and formations often dwarf analysts and leave them much less enlightened than they would like to be. Among those scholars who have spent their life-time in unearthing the mutually engaging forces of language and culture, I would like to include, with some sense of pride, Jawaharlal Handoo, a very distinguished colleague of the CIIL fraternity. Handoo has been a student of folklore studies with stupendous amount of published work. The professional research work as well as creative texts crafted as interventions and *lores alive* that have been included in this volume are all dedicated to honour Handoo on his attaining 60th productive year. To that extent, *Culturation* is to be viewed as our humble way of honouring a scholar in the Indian tradition on his *sastipuurti*, literally ‘completion of 60th year’. But more importantly, these are to be taken as promises of projects in culture studies that Handoo would have liked to have been undertaken anyway by his numerous colleagues and students spreading over different corners of the globe.

The term *culturation* in the title of this anthology would probably be scorned by the ‘purists’ and scoffed by others. And yet, we use the term to mark the ideas that build on language as an inherent and inseparable part of culture, and also as a process that is beyond ‘grammar’.

As someone who has watched Jawaharlal Handoo mainly from an outer window, I hesitate in sewing up the papers included in this volume together, as I think a more appropriate tribute to his efforts in promoting the discipline of folklore would be to ensure that more manpower gets created in this area, that serious efforts be made to absorb such developed manpower in applied folklore studies, and to see that some of this gets to practical applications in solving, or in at least, in understanding the complex and overlapping area of language and culture studies.

Nevertheless, the papers presented here, I am sure, would survive the Acadine test. As we know, Acadine is a fountain of Sicily with magic properties, mentioned by Diodorus Siculus. Writings were thrown into it to be tested; if genuine they floated, if spurious they sank to the bottom.

By presenting this academic offering to a scholar of extra-ordinary calibre, we are only honouring ourselves.

Mysore
17.07.2001.

Udaya Narayana Singh

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Consciousness of Double Exteriority : The Problem of Identity Formation and Nation Building in the Midst of Multiculturality

Pramod Talgeri

Understanding an alien culture, it appears, is always "misunderstanding" it, whereby this misunderstanding could be taken as a form of constructive reception of the alien culture. To some extent, all understanding is a framework for deconstructing and reconceiving. In the first instance, encountering an alien culture would amount to a confrontation between two heterogeneous sensibilities that are conditioned by the intrinsic value systems of their respective cultures. Such a confrontation most probably would evoke resistance to experiencing the "otherness" of the alien culture. It may even obscure understanding and block any possibility of meaningful communication.

Resistance to experiencing "otherness" arises from individuals' strong sense of identification with their own culture, when they are deeply rooted in their cultural tradition, but do not possess the intellectual flexibility to consciously displace themselves from their stable position, which is stabilized by cultural ethos.

How do I, as a member of a particular cultural community, come to recognize myself as part of a collective consciousness that shares a single sense of intimacy, familiarity and affinity for a certain value system and dissociates itself from other value systems? Why are my possibilities for identifying with an alien object, limited to constructing analogies to my own culture? How do my preconditioned notions of conviction give way to final interpretations?

By virtue of being born and having grown up in a particular community, I develop a passive manner of unconditionally identifying – in various degrees of priority – with the objects, historical events, social actions and natural surroundings of this community. Such intransigent identification constitutes a value that I associate with a certain object. It does not call for discursiveness nor does it allow any interpretation. The value is absolutely subjugated to the object, though its genesis might be conditioned by diverse and historical factors. All cultural requisites for communication have to be perceived relative to the values attached to them. On the basis of an elaborate value code, acquired while living in

my community, I also cultivate a particular way of experiencing and reacting to the world that is shared by other members. A consistent institutional continuity of identification with the community's intrinsic value system thus emerges. My sensibilities therefore respond to the world in accordance with this value system. In this way I become conscious of the continuity of my own tradition.

Such an awareness gives me a kind of security and consistency in practicing and understanding my own culture. I believe I understand and identify with my own culture, for my hermeneutic operations within my cultural environment are based on an "interactive reciprocity"¹ among members of the cultural community. This means that individuals freely and mutually recognize and respect the rights and duties of other members. Internalizations of cultural codes and norms give me the confidence necessary for interacting with members of my community. This is how a collective identity forms among individual members of a cultural group. Hegel conceives this dialectical conceptual structure as a process of becoming self-conscious, through a normatively developed intersubjectivity, of reciprocal cognizance and recognition among the society's members:

*Es ist ein Selbstbewußtsein für ein anderes Selbstbewußtsein
zunächst unmittelbar als ein Anderes für ein Anderes. Ich
schaue in ihm als Ich mich selbst an, aber auch darin ein
unmittelbar daseiendes, als Ich absolut gegen mich
selbständiges anderes Objekt*².

This reciprocally recognized and generalized self-consciousness, according to Hegel, is spirit (Geist), which objectivizes itself in norms and common ways of living, forming a collective identity for individual members on the basis of these "reciprocally recognized" norms.

This collective identity guarantees consistency in the reciprocal responses to the multifarious interactions of community members, thus creating a plurality of cultural reflexes that constitutes, to twist Edward Hall's definition of culture, "that part of man's behaviour which he takes for granted."³ During this process, these cultural reflexes – which

¹ I have taken this term from HABERMAS, *Kultur und Kritik*, and from this keynote address in HABERMAS, "Komplexe Gesellschaften." Author's English translation.

² HEGEL 430.

³ HALL 30.

originate in certain functional necessities -- become determinate elements of cultural communication.

A multitude of these different and simultaneous social determinants, which constitute cultural interaction, reflect certain intentions and are based on a central, effective and prevalent system of values and norms.⁴ The codification of these norms and mythological ideas and the continuation of traditional practices steer and coordinate the organized behaviour of the cultural community. It is these internalized and organized cultural reflexes that convey a kind of symbolic reality of that particular cultural community and that evolve into the community's particular sense of identity: on the one hand they unify the sociocultural behaviour of the community, but on the other hand they demarcate its cultural surroundings and distinguish it from other communities. Within this demarcated cultural consciousness and its surroundings, members nurture a homogeneous sense of identity, encouraging a unifying but also separatist feeling among community members.

However, such a concept of homogeneous identity tends to ignore the inherent network of multiple and seemingly contradictory social practices that generate pluralistic structures of communication. It projects a unified image of culture as a centred structure radiating one generalized understanding as a common denominator and glossing over diverse particularities and specificities interspersed in the process of social communication.

The Western definition of a cultural community has so far usually been based on such unitary concepts of cultural identity. This has its origin in the relationship between culture and politics that marked 19th- and early 20th-century Eurocentric ideology.

Towards the end of this century, however, such monolithic concepts seem to have lost their earlier meaning. Various contradictions, discontinuities and confrontations have unfolded in this century, as have cultural affinities, commonalities and intercultural understanding in several parts of the world. This century has witnessed tumultuous global events, including the rise and fall of ideologies such as communism and fascism and the end of colonialism. It has seen the emergence of disastrous phenomena such as fundamentalism, terrorism and ethocentrism. A new consciousness of internationalism has been created, but at the same time also a consciousness of parochial

regionalism. All this has influenced our attitudes and way of life. Indeed, human life in the 20th century – even that of a villager in the remotest corner of our country, in the scheduled rice fields of Vietnam or Korea or the deserts of Somalia – has been shaped by a multicultural heritage and interaction, which was rarely the case in earlier centuries. This situation necessarily poses the problem of one's identity, particularly in a time of crisis. In describing the consciousness of his identity, my friend and distinguished Indian journalist Dileep Padgaonkar wrote in an interview with Israeli writer Amos Oz:

I was born a Hindu, in a certain caste. We have had 110 years of Muslim rule. I cannot ignore its contribution to the enrichment of Indian culture. And then we had Western rule and I cannot deny what they contributed to shaping me and my country. Therefore, I do not wish to be either apologetic or aggressive about any of these components of my identity. The problem arises, when you are obliged to assert your Hinduness, your Islamness, your Westernization, in order to assert your identity. In fact, each one of us has a cultural gene of the other. Our failure to recognize this has created horrible problems.⁵

And the 20th century is replete with such colossal tragedies. We have not been able to distinguish between two kinds of identity, one a common origin within the sociocultural context and the other a larger normative framework within the political and economic context. Communities that have failed to evolve this conscious ambivalence of identity and thus to recognize this distinction have been facing difficulties in achieving national and social integration. I perceive such difficulties – in the Indian context, for example – basically as the task of "creating a secular state in a religious society".

Another feature of the 20th century is that certain 19th century concepts, with which we are used to identifying ourselves, have in modern times become questionable. One such concept is the nation-state. Its viability in sustaining civilization is increasingly diminishing. This does not mean favouring the merger of cultures or all ethnic specificities into a faceless uniformity.

But I believe there ought to be another method for peoples, communities and cultures to develop a sense of identity

5

Dileep Padgaonkar, *The Times of India*, Literary Supplement, 7.3.93, 17.

beyond this archaic instrument of the nation-state [...]. It is as absurd to live in the 21st century with a system of 190 or 200 nation-states right now, as it is to try to control the Paris airport with the help of candles. It simply does not work. In a world where a minor nuclear accident can have an impact over the entire planet, where a slight disarray in the Tokyo stock exchange has immediate consequences, we have to think of something more sophisticated to understand what is going on. The 'international community', if such a thing really exists, should act as navigator, it should replace the nation-state with a more up-to-date substitute relevant for the 21st century.

Judging by what is going on in our country, we suddenly have become aware of the fact that it is not possible to conceive the idea of an Indian nation in a conventional sense. Unlike many other European countries that organically developed into nations in the 16th and 17th centuries, India did not have a basis for a nation-state till the early 20th century. In a certain sense we are a belated nation, lacking a coherent national (subcontinental?) tradition, without which a multicultural country like India cannot live a healthy political life. This lack of national tradition appears to be compensated for by the people's urge for excessive glorification of history and mythology, expressed in a regressive longing for the glorified past. It is difficult for India to derive its identity solely from historical images, since today conditions for forming a national identity based on past achievements are more difficult to create than in earlier epochs. These conditions cannot relate present priorities to past achievements and therefore necessarily lead to alienation.

Second, in India it is evident that we cannot and should not cultivate nationalism in the Western sense of the term, which denotes the dominance of a single ethnic, religious and linguistic identity. India was never a nation-state in this sense. Throughout its history, India has been at most a conglomerate of different, loosely connected nationalities, at least until the British consolidated their colonial hold on it. So the idea of nationhood is comparatively new, if not alien, to the Indian consciousness. And if we should talk at all of Indian nationalism in contemporary India, I would say it is still going through a very complex, painful process of internalizing various heterogeneities of our pluralistic culture.

It is a painful process because we do not consider "Indianness" as a geographically and historically conditioned concept that has absorbed a multicentred cultural heritage. This multicentricity has given Indian culture its predominantly syncretic character, its pluralistic tradition, its absorptive manner of internalizing alien influences; these are the main features of a composite Indian culture that contextualize the contemporary Indian situation and are essentially reflected in the country's different artifacts. Cultural manifestations of these multicentred peculiarities most probably would characterize what "Indianness" would mean in contrast to monolingual, totalitarian and fundamentalist cultures elsewhere. This plural heritage should be highlighted while defining "Indianness," which would make the study of our culture in the present Indian context more meaningful.

Let me come back to the problem of our national consciousness, which became still more complicated after 6 December 1992, when a five-hundred-year-old mosque, believed to have been built on the ruins of a Hindu temple destroyed by the Moslems, was demolished by Hindus. In the midst of the communal frenzy instigated by Hindu extremists, there was a fear that this resurgence of Hindu revivalism would unleash a reign of terror against minorities. I ascribe these aberrations of our distorted relationship to our own history. Rather than a rise of Hindu nationalism per se, I see a kind of emotional upsurge of ethnocultural community feelings within some groups of orthodox Hindus.

When a nation is forcibly created by certain historical compulsions or external pressures, a discrepancy arises between imagined national values and hard political realities. British colonial India did not emerge as a result of an actual melting of Indian states and tribes, but rather was held together by skillful administration, thus becoming a "jewel in the crown," an ornate balancing act between the various ethnic and religious communities. This led to truncated notions of diverse social values and political order, which were in conflict with each other. These diversities were held together and to some extent sublimated in the face of the common enemy – the colonial ruler – till the ruler was thrown out. And in 1947 India had to be divided into two ideologically hostile states.

I feel that attempts to internalize this partition have necessarily led to an abnormal situation, in that rulers of both states have tried to create new artificial identities: an Islamic Pakistani and a secularist Indian identity. When the Pakistani model of forging a national identity on the basis of one religion met with disaster, it proved that religion cannot

provide a sound base for the formation of a modern state, at least on a multicultural region like the Indian sub-continent.

On the other hand, we have tried to create a national identity on a secular basis. But this secularism somehow disregarded and glossed over the disparate regional, ethnic and religious community feelings that were supposed to be sublimated. However, India as a cultural entity existed even without being a nation for thousands of years. Through the centuries, India thus has been able to build not a national tradition but one of multicultural coexistence, tolerance and rational interaction with other communities.

In fact, I see an interesting similarity between what is presently happening in a traditional society like India and a (post) modern society like Germany. While I was teaching my course on German cultural history, one of my students confronted me with the question as to why even people of industrialized societies are influenced by the appeals of their common religion, nation, language or race: Why are they moved more deeply and violently by these ethnocentric appeals than by the rational appeals of common class conditions, ecological concerns, feminist solidarity etc.?

Many social scientists in Germany are concerned about this inexplicable phenomenon in modern society. The problem with all these social theories is that they focus primarily on the self-image of the society rather than on something that causes such an image to fade. Every society is engaged in evolving its self-image, a kind of "corporate identity" that it would like to project to the outside world. This has been the case in postwar (West) German society, which has consciously tried to break with its Nazi past and has successfully transformed political defeat into material prosperity. Most West German political parties evolved, based on a political consensus which maintained that, in a modern industrial society, values such as social justice, political equality, nonviolent communication, tolerance and individual development can be nurtured within a rational, coherent context, since rationality has been the basis of modernity. In the course of realizing this rationality, it was believed that negative values such as domination, injustice, war, prejudice or collective compulsions like nationalism or religious fanaticism — in short, the dreadful pictures of the past — would automatically disappear.

Such faith in rationality, deeply rooted in the notion of progress in the 18th-century German Enlightenment tradition, was strengthened by the success story of democratic and capitalist postwar West Germany,

culminating in German reunification, which was symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. But these grand historical developments also overlooked and suppressed the dark side of social life and material progress. In fact, Adorno and Horkheimer, leading lights of the Frankfurt School, saw in the same rationality forces of destruction, "repressive equality" and an "impoverishment of thinking and perception" that might lead to a perversion of rationality.

Western postwar societies, suddenly in the midst of modern affluence, rediscovered "we" and "they" feelings. Right-wing extremists in Germany have whipped up passions of hatred against Jews and foreigners by appealing to the primitive instincts of the German masses with slogans like "Germany to Germans!" or "Foreigners get lost!" Notions of "collective identity," "nationality" and "ethnicity" are now filling the vacuum left by the end of socialism, which has been viewed as the death knell of nationalism. In the seventies, neo-Marxists declared nationalism to be an outdated fiction that had been replaced by the notion of class consciousness. In the eighties, however, class consciousness was replaced by consumer consciousness, a triumph of the free market economy. And now it appears that this saturated consumerism of Western societies is giving way to ethnocentric fundamentalism.

But in a modern society, according to German sociologist Hartmut Esser, no objective basis for permanent ethnic community formations or systematic mobilizations exists. There is no place for ethnocultural "we" feelings in such a rational setup, a modernist would argue; at most they are to be seen as residues, regressions or products of manipulation that at best might be found in underdeveloped countries.

If this is so, how should one understand this murderous xenophobia in European society? One possible answer to this question, suggested by another German sociologist, Karl Otto Hondrich, may also be applicable to the present Indian situation. Hondrich says that such ethnocentric appeals directly evoke our old experiences, which are anything but abstract or fictional. They are renewed afresh in every individual's history, right in early childhood. In an elementary unison between children and parents, children and children, friends and neighbours, a sense of common origin is cultivated as a value notion. It transcends all considerations of utility and vested interests. This experience of common origin cannot, however, be transferred to a larger collective framework through ideology or questionable analogy. It converts itself almost unconsciously into an obviousness. In such a

state of mind, ethnocultural "we" feelings are generated that give members of that community a sense of inner strength and ethnic identity vis-à-vis the strangers who do not share their common origin.

Ethnocultural "we" feelings cannot be reduced to economic interests or political ambitions. They are factors of security and power in a pre-economic and pre-political sense. When such "we" feelings of a majority community threaten to drift into a minority situation, then a particular defence mechanism of the majority community starts to operate. This is exactly what is happening in Germany today, where, for example, non-German children constitute a majority of pupils in many schools. German parents react to this situation in terms of threatened interests ("Our children don't get enough attention," "their grammar is weak," "they are not learning enough" etc.). But there is much more to this, namely the injured ethnocultural identity that gradually gives rise to anonymous hatred against the "intruding" minority. But the "corporate identity" of Germany, as a modern rational society, would not permit such sentiments to be expressed, as they are considered taboo and are at best sublimated into supracommunal self-images. Those not capable of this sublimation become conscious of their "we" feelings, which they like to justify by shouting slogans like "Ich bin bin stolz, ein Deutscher zu sein" (I am proud to be a German). In India we are reminded of the slogan "Garv se kaho ke hum Hindu hai!" (Say with pride that we are Hindus!).

As long as ethnocultural community feelings are interpreted only in terms of economic and political interests, we remain oblivious to the pitfalls of the actual phenomenon of ethnocentric consciousness, which harbours a potential for violence and separatism. Not one social scientist or creative writer has dealt with this aspect of the phenomenon in India. Its handling by immature and unskilled politicians has proven to be disastrous. They have woken up the tiger.

According to Hondrich, however, it would be misleading to say that "old" ethnic or religious identities, exploited by vested interests, are revived in a fundamentalistic way as a reaction against "new" values. First, fundamentalism as both reaction and result is something new. Second, the manifested ethnocultural conflicts are merely extremely critical cases. If one focuses only on these conflicts, these riots, then one tends to underestimate the permanent strength and influence of cultural "we" feelings, which continue to be latently effective but are normally invisible. Even if we expose the leaders and their henchmen who are behind the communal riots, we are not in a position to fathom

the deeper reasons behind the resistance and allegiance of their followers, and the compulsions of the recurrence and lastingness of such communal feelings. They do not emerge merely as a rejection of secular modernity; in fact, they also form part of a pluralistic modernity. If one understands modernization as a process of differentiation and intensification, then such feelings will also be intensified. In a global society of eight or ten billion people, there will be a tremendously growing demand for particular, regional ethnics or other collective identities to play an active mediatory role between the individual and the totality. Otherwise the poor individual will be lost in the vast ocean of modernist plurality.

Does a modern state really need to be a nation, which necessarily involves the category of ethnic identity? The individual can achieve self-realization and self-fulfilment while a rational identity is being built up in a pluralistic society, where the process of communication can be maintained via public discourse. Many liberal thinkers in Germany such as Günter Grass, Walter Jens, Jürgen Habermas have been advocating a 'nationless' state of Germans, provided it has a good constitution.

*Such a possible of model of a nationless state could be vision of the next century, which will not abolish cultural differences. Indeed, I regard the world as a polyphony. I do not expect all the mankind to play the same musical instrument. This could be the lowest common denominator may be MTV, McDonald's or something like that. There should be different musical instruments, hundreds of civilizations, thousands of communities, tens of thousands of local cultures. No nation-states. We should strive for another model [...]*⁶

which will keep the dialogue among cultures going,

*a dialogue that characterizes our age, a dialogue in which no one has the last word, in which neither voice is reduced to the status of a simple object, and in which we gain advantages from our externality to the other.*⁷

⁶

Amos Oz, The Times of India, Literary Supplement, 7.3.93, 17.

⁷

TODOROV 251 Author's English translation

A modern pluralistic society, whether in a First or Third World country, is essentially an "architecture of complexity." Such an architecture cannot be built on functional differentiation and individualization only. Ethnic identities, community feelings and regional affinities also will form an integral part of a complex plural society. I think we should be courageous enough to view these value notions as a secular and rational framework for social communication. Sublimation of such feelings will not ensure lasting peace because the indeterminate heterogeneity constitutes the essential nature of a modern complex society. Superficial identification with some of the so-called commonalities would not permit an adequate understanding of the culture, since culture, on account of its overdetermined character, has to be comprehended as a "decentred structure."⁸ With a more complexly structured communication and a less unified concept of understanding, every culture would always permit a wide range of interpretations that could be produced without departing from the cultural determinants.

Yet, this pluralistic understanding does not call for such an "assimilation" of the otherness of the "other", but instead attempts a process of disorientation of the consciousness that would catalyze an intellectual activation within the consciousness to search for a new emancipatory orientation. This orientation lies in the formation of an intersubjective correlate: the experience of the self through the experience of the "other."⁹

This is the process of displacing the subject from its tradition of identification;¹⁰ an attempt is made to "live the difference in the identity."¹¹ This consciousness conveys a differentiating and identifying sense of "otherness". I differentiate through the "other". Thomas Mann perspicuously and ironically articulated this sense of "otherness" in his Indian legend *The Transposed Heads*:

The friendship between the two youths was based on the diversity in their I- and my- feelings, those of the one yearning towards those of the other. Incorporation, that is,

⁸ This term is used by Raman Selden in connection with the complexity of literary texts in SELDEN 96.

⁹ Cf. SCHMIDT 547 f. Author's English translation.

¹⁰ On this aspect of comprehending alterity cf. TALGERI, "Der Absetzungsprozeß des Bewußtseins" 102-106; TALGERI, "Vom Verständnis der Andersheit."

¹¹ TODOROV 294.

*makes for comparisons, comparisons give rise to uneasiness, uneasiness to wonderment, wonderment tends to admiration; and finally admiration turns to a yearning for mutual exchange and unity. Etad vai tad. This is that. And the doctrine applies especially in youth, when the clay of life is still soft and the I-and my-feelings not yet hardened into conflicts of the single personality.*¹²

The encounter with the "other" becomes a "yearning" for mutual exchange in diversity. But this yearning is not a unifying process. By obliterating the contours of my identity I am still not the other, and yet I yearn to discover the "other". For the "other" must be discovered. It is a "neutral point,"¹³ as Todorov would put it, not in the sense of equidistance but in the sense that both the self and the other are experienced from within. "Without becoming an Indian, Cabeza de Vaca was no more the same old Spaniard."¹⁴ This is how Todorov describes the "neutral point" that the Spanish colonizer reaches in his encounter with American Indian culture. This is what I mean by the displacement of the subject from its tradition of identification and the tradition's perpetual unmaking. This experience of displacement would correspond to that of the modern exiled man, "a being, who has lost his country without thereby acquiring another, who lives in a double exteriority."¹⁵ The yearning for the other will continue through innumerable stages and different degrees of assimilation. It will be perennial process. For every individual and community, it will be new encounter.

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Sovereignty, Theory and the Linguistics of Reciprocity

Probal Dasgupta

- A. Some social actors visualize themselves as mainly doing things. These, call them the Practicals, wear the face of people who feel sure that their doings are a serious part of the general ado. Others, call them the Theoreticals, think about thinking. They are made to feel certain that this has nothing to do with that generality. They feel oppressed by the general belief that their theoretical activity does not count as a contribution to action as others see it. This counter-position of practice and theory may be a bit of a caricature if presented so sharply. But it has a reality that one cannot efface by disguising it or embedding it in more complex pictures. It may therefore help to face this reality.

There is one thing all Theoreticals share. Even those who want to make sure that the marginal tongues become self-confident, lion-like, full-throated languages and that their speakers flourish – even those Theoretical Thinkers share this. What they all share is a quest for a potential link between Our Theory, for some 'Us', and Their Practice, for some 'Them'.

This quest has been frustrating. So Theoretical Thinkers have changed the way they say this. The word Practice has given way to the term Action. It is a familiar fact, one which will no doubt be placed under general scrutiny some day, that today's Action is not yesterday's Practice. A special case of this fact is that upper-case Theory, as this term is used in the humanities, is not the lower-case theory which yesterday was shared by the social sciences with the humanities.

Today's Theoreticals, who have some sort of positive relation to Theory with a capital T even if they contest some versions of Theory or even claim to have given it up completely, sometimes look for Action. This typically involves saying to some very specific Location, "I want to go local with you. Please let me in. I am sure you want your own kind of regional sovereignty. I will struggle with you so you can be a sovereign region."

These factors shape such contexts as the one in which this particular intervention is framed. And – "alas!", I interject, no doubt in agreement with many readers – they also shape some of the stylistic necessities of such an intervention.

- B. The Sovereign Region, a major oxymoron of our times. Not only the literal or geographically contiguous stretches of land, water, and other substances that look like regions. But also the notional stretches of women, of students, of the handicapped, of the indigenous peoples, of former untouchables, of other categories that are neither classical nations nor classes. These stretches are entities sharing some properties with regions. Perhaps we can agree to call them New Regions.

It is no oxymoron that Regions, old and new, are fighting for dignity. It is a fact and not paradox that struggle cannot be waged as a war, and yet wage it we must. Such a novel compulsion has changed the way we think about fighting.

This change, sometimes called post modernity, is one of the forces affecting the rhetorical space within which this paper is compelled to forge its style. The formal academic style which many readers have often asked me to move closer to, reflects the standard rules of a joust between courteous knights in the arena of academia. It would be dishonest to follow such rules slavishly, and thereby to encourage adherence to them by all writers, if one is claiming that those rules are no longer legitimate.

The modern wish was to organize a reasonable set of nation-states. It then turned out that nation-states, once established, fail to be reasonable. Then reasonable people switched to post-national struggles for the dignity of regions and other non-national categories.

The fact that regions are fighting for dignity is not the oxymoron, then. What intrigues and seems to fail is the notion of regional sovereignty. In this paper, I shall take the position that notions such as regional sovereignty do not express optimally the goal of dignity for regions and region like sub-populations. I would like to argue, instead that the point is to approach this desire for sovereignty in terms of the right of any community to have its role as a cultural crucible respected as a form of rationality, continuous even with the historical cultures with the biggest archives.

- C. Of course, we must respect the Regional Sovereignty flag, even as some of us question its coherence. Many reasonable thinkers have

repeatedly hoisted this flag. This is their way of raising the question of power / knowledge. We must face the fact that power, in our times insinuates itself into our knowledge. It thus shapes the very grounds of our opinions, thus preempting resistance. Many Theoreticals, on everybody's behalf, have scaled the heights and the dangerous surfaces of this fact of power / knowledge. We are – all over the world of nations and all over the space of academic disciplines and practical struggles, various "we" are – beginning to vicariously face and surmount these dangers with these postmodern heroes. Just as earlier generations slowly realized that some people do our mountaineering for us, and began to applaud them as a way of visualizing these Everest's, likewise we clap for our mountain-scaling Theoreticals, because they are There. (Mind has its Mountains, right?)

So, we join our heroes in raising the question of power / knowledge. We learn how to ask what we can do about all this, if even our askings are pre-packaged and pre-shaped in ways we seem unable to examine and fight. So far, so good. But while we pursue this puzzle, our daily practices have to work out some tentative answers.

These important temporary answers include the particular vis-à-vis between marginal linguistic groups like tribals in a country like India and the very few "mainstream" citizens interested in addressing the issues of their existence. Any face-to-face, any inter-local coalition, any inter-category sympathy is the beginning of a possibly important answer.

For the questions are about real survivals at stake. The psychic, cultural, and usually even physical existence of some communities is in mortal danger and today's proudly anarchic and hedonistic public systems. People in such peril cannot wait for Theory to deliver perfect goods after all the disasters have been allowed to happen. They need immediate support and alliances.

And yet, our reasons for questioning the notion of a sovereign region cannot be wished away. Theory too is real and urgent. Beyond the coalitions that do work already, we need to reinvent the alliance of Theory with what we shall call Practice. We might reserve the term Action for a version of Practice that is emphatically decoupled from Theory.

- D. There are real reasons for writing with some hope that the alliance can be reinvented. At least in the context of South Asian Studies, critical social scientists have begun to discover that linguistic

concerns are crucial to be critical project as a whole. And linguists interested in social issues have been finding that postmodern Theoreticals can be construed as allies of a sociolinguistics which wishes to implement the programme — empowering Speech over Writing — that lies at the heart of the linguistic critique of grammar. Thus historiography, already in coalition with textual Theory, and serious linguistics are about to be capable of mutual hospitality at an intellectual level.

Such an encounter will give us powerful and far-reaching tools of thought for the new struggles that the marginal categories have been waging, with no hope of winning conventional wars. Their only hope lies in a major cultural change so that the theory, and thus the practice, of new debates makes room for those who cannot hope for conventional victories.

This interdisciplinary coalition will need to find new ways of expressing interlocal solidarity. It is not easy to invent seriously usable devices to ensure that our attempt to break out of theoretical and other ghettos becomes real.

- E. It is possible for Theory to be a new crucible of the right sort, it seems to me. I would like to suggest that Theory can incubate the new struggles. It can provide shelter, tools, resources that really help. But this depends on those of us who join the crucible, making it helpful. We need to make a deal that enables us to help each other. One way to formulate this deal is for all fighters for the causes of old regions and New Regions (or new social categories visualized in other non-national terms) to say, revisiting a by now forgotten conjuncture: our discourses must interrupt each other. This stems from the view that any one-issue movement discourse that regards itself as complete will fail to have any real regard for others. This failure undermines self-regard. In that case the entire joint endeavour collapses.

Another formulation might prefer to emphasize making room for each other. This directly brings out the negotiated content of the new space. One is not simply saying: we know we cannot win, so we are forced to negotiate. Instead, one rethinks these practical reasons for aiming for non-victory outcomes. One really sees the principles that make this something one might want to aim for, even if one is not forced to.

Such real seeing turns the negotiation into more than just sifting through the debris of old rules of war. More than simply saying. " oh

well, war was clean, but alas, it has given way to guerrilla warfare; we don't know how to replace it with truly peaceful principles of deciding what is going to count as final."

- F. But Theory can do the work of a new crucible only if we hold it accountable. For we need to tame the specific power / knowledge that makes Theory fierce. An excessively fierce Theoretical knowledge, like an oversharpe knife, bites the hand that wields it. How do you tame Theory politically? The whole enterprise of political taming is shot through with Theory, which leaves you with no alternatives, right? Well, perhaps the concept of new regions and the option of struggles that seek non-adversarial outcomes might enable us to try the following pastiche of Euclid.

Given : a region Old or New.

Required to prove : the Region can manage and replenish knowledge resources without excessive dependence on Theory or other centralized knowledge banks perceived as lying outside the Region.

Construction : a formula that defines knowledge as Action $\rightarrow$ action $\rightarrow$, which says that Master Action with a capital 'A' leads via and as knowledge to the small 'a' of apprentice action and leads further, along the same modifiability line, to future apprenticeships.

Proof : these local lines provide action continuability by setting up traditions and other cycles that only optionally cross-refer to other regions or decontextualized abstract knowledge pools that initiate centralization and other apparatuses of power. Action continuability constitutes knowledge resources. Q.E.D.

Armed with this existence of proof for local knowledges, we can subject the Theory machines to a new kind of satyagraha (the Gadhian term for non-violent resistance, I may need to remind some readers!). This may force them to help create crucibles for the work that the new struggles need. Many practitioners of Theory – to their credit, if you ask me – have been serving in this capacity before any satyagraha forces them to. The satyagraha will simply help them consider not just the inter-regional power issues but the within-region cognition issues in terms of autonomous sustainability and other context maintenance imperatives.

I must now address readers who may have found this pastiche offensively un-academic. The use of such a format strikes me as a possibly helpful way to remind ourselves that Theory has been

'fierce' in its excessive reliance on notions of formal demonstration, adequate evidence, impeccable proof, which assume that by using these things some warrior can defeat another warrior in an academic debate. Hence this quick trip to Point Euclid, to note that this is how, where the action is in the type of inquiry, we are engaged in.

Readers who can communicate such points to appropriate listeners – including those who in the liberal rules of the old academic joust are exercising their stony right to stonewall without listening – without using this sort of format will no doubt make less pastiche-ridden contributions to the quite general task of inventing such alliances as we are speaking of in these inadequate ways. Expository methods are part of the politics of a satyagraha that can tame Theory itself.

- G. I just said We can wage such a satyagraha. Which we, you will ask, and located Where, if one is waxing so eloquent about Regions and other Locations?

There is no given or a prior constituency for such a politics. But constituencies are made, not born. We clearly need to rely on standing workshops (along the lines of standing committees) that keep looking, and looking seriously, at knowledge / power and meddling, equally seriously, with prevalent formulas. Such a workshop can call itself Captionist or Perceptualist, to insist that its interlocal practice of mutually checkable visualizing must not be allowed to collapse into any bureaucracy with a penchant for abstract, context-free conceptals. For bureaucrats are given to flying at stratospheric levels and handwaving at the putative realities down there on the hardly relevant earth. (Image taken with thanks from a letter Mark Fettes wrote me in 1990). Our workshops need to doggedly insist on doggishly continuing to smell the earth as you run along and sniff at whoever your are tracking.

That workshop can wage the satyagraha. No reason to think a permanent workshop cannot live as a community. This remark alludes not to any political party and its various incarnations that remain in suspended animation when they do not physically assemble. I am thinking of the praxis called Esperanto.

Here are some reasons for believing that the permanent workshop called Esperanto is a good candidate for the role of captionist initiator of satyagraha to encourage (or do I mean compel) the Theory enterprise to actually empower. I phrase these reasons as a captionist manifesto, for reasons of rhetorical strategy, and address the manifesto to all Theoreticals, mainly because some linguists and

language planning scholars have begun to take Theory seriously and some Theoreticals have started paying attention to linguistics in general and sociolinguistics in particular.

- H. *A perceptualist manifesto* : A letterful of captions from an Esperantist to the many Theoreticals who don't yet know what's good for them:
1. *Your self-disempowerment trip* : Most Theoreticals find that they need to link their lives and textualities with local and regional action-spaces. This need, and the Theoreticals' attempts to satisfy it, becomes serious and urgent when they act on the post-structuralist idea that power, taking as it does the general and place-destroying (despecifying) form of action hitting other actions, can best be countered by following and (geometrically) continuing local action-lines.
 2. *You find marginal friends* : Such an agenda leads to fulfilling and memorable coalitions and initiatives. The Theoreticals disinherit themselves from privileged class-gender-location powerpoints and truly get through to many marginals, with whose help they get a new act together. So far, so great.
 3. *But you remain Anglicists* : What is all this banter for? Well, such a self-disinheriting trip proceeds from the industrial base standardly called English. And the Theoreticals who are stuck with this point of departure, for all their posturings about essentialism being dead in general and very dead in their own unprivileged lives in particular, find that the essences that cling to English make it a less than reliable relay between the locations they would like to work at and with.
 4. *Having failed to learn from feminism*: It is a problem of visualizations. Users of English find it hard to ignore the baggage of the nationalist and imperialist history its present flesh is heir to. That this baggage works on us must be clear to an epoch marked by the feminist engagement with patriarchally 'neutral' pronoun usage. However hospitable and generous English may become, it cannot encode a mutual hospitality, for constitutive reasons. How, then, shall the Theoreticals visualize the new disinherited, postpossessive planet which they hope will rise from the ashes of chauvinistic aggression and its consumerist mutants? Am I pleading for a revanchist return to French, or for all of us arbitrarily and solidarily learn Gikuyu or Spanish or Malayo-Indonesian?

5. *Unexamined jokes not laughworthy* : The point is to both laugh at the joke and work towards a serious understanding — a Theoretical understanding in as much as nothing less careful will be sustainable as a comprehension that can be mutably and thus lastingly passed on — of why it sounds funny.
6. *The nativities are ex-independent* : Every individual community and its congenial-familiar 'native' language, with or without a working equation with English to keep its dictionaries supplied from the industrial and commercial terminology warehouses, is in a state of advanced defensiveness. We normally call it the current decay of identities, pointing to the fundamentalisms and other defensive armour worn to hide the otherwise obvious wear and tear. What is funny is the image of anyone seeking global cognitive solidarity on board one of these weary armatures, welcome to the mixed metaphor.
7. *No roots please, we're displaced* : As places reconfigure, as migration and displacement of populations as well as the inevitable re-migrations of once-moved population segments fail to find them congenial destinations, one becomes hazy about who really owns which place and has a warrant, though never exactly a desire to welcome other comers. Even as nostalgia and roots become big industries, and the Theoreticals sing their odysseys away from such lumpenism but lapse into alternative nostalgias and thus fail to resist industriality, we all grow away from the metaphor of rooted, arboreal organicity, and mix even our puns.
8. *Seriously, I mean mutual hospitality* : It dawns on us that all people are each other's guests, or need to learn how to visualize selves and others in such dawning light. Even we who Theoreticalize begin to grope towards rewriting our stories of fathers in a language that casts the parents in the role of First Hosts of young migrants. At least one takes it assumption-space.
9. *On implementability* : And why is this supposed to be more than yet another coffee table conversation around somebody's private utopia, devoid of sharability or implementation algorithms? Oh you're in that mode, well you see there's this view of how the Brits quit Golden Hind, coz it was getting too hot for their cash box to cope with, their progeny often save face by pretending they'd given up because it was too expensive. Fine, fine. No disputes with that presentation, please, all packages are equally packed ever since Packard invented the Persuaders. So they fled from what they

couldn't afford. Could it be happening to the nation-state now, the way it apparently happened to the empire then? What if the nation-states as warring leviathans have become too costly.

10. *Bye to the monumentalist century*: Yes, yes, save your splutter, you do see it, don't you. The big deal was a general mobilization. From Marx through Weber right down to monumental Fordism. Today it is not just Theory that figures out what demobilization is supposed to be doing to us. Or why we must therefore run away from the normal seriousness of a Marx or a Weber and from the standard excesses of a record breaking monumentality. We are witness also to the nation-state lyrically festiving itself into the Anderson-Chatterjee nation which claims to be cultural in a high key and only optionally martial, that too in a low key.
11. *After verticality* : The vertical nation of royal authority of course sought legitimacy in rapacity and conquest. And it makes sense that democractic republics, claiming to represent the jointly considered and evolving thoughts of their participants, should feel the need to go ex-military, and re-cultural, whence all the revivals, nostalgias, fundamentalisms, in what can only be a pious i.e. religious gesture.
12. *Will you remain forever professional fun-seekers?*: Unless literature cum Theory can grow up, take itself sustainably-seriously, and seize the opportunity to turn this reculturalization of the nation into not just an entertainment gallery (which is okay, surely having fun is the Fun Damental right that nobody should be Lamental about) but also an action area. Don't be tourists, dear Theoreticals. Do wage the struggle for hearts and minds in what has become a lifelong passion for all ages, genders, classes, and handicapacities, in the arena variously termed Culture and Education and Human Resources and did someone say Skinware.
13. *Serious strategy has shifted to culture* : As nations grudgingly but more and more really demilitarize, wielding culture as the prime time weapon of Dale-Carnegian influence and friendship, inevitably the content of culture starts mattering. Do the Theoreticals then start nattering?
14. *Dear Anglicists, You do matter, despite your collective narcissism*: However much their teething problems may chatter, they are now on the spot. It is their job to visualize what we earthlings should be doing now that the nation-jelly attains this unheard-of state of cuisine. And at a time like this -- 'There is no time', Jeeves reminded Bertie Wooster, 'sir, when ties do not matter' -- they still claim not to

have noticed the existence of a language that its serious users have found suitable for such visualizing job.

15. *Yes I do mean the International Auxiliary Language whose practitioners stand for an ecology of language, notice the length of this caption* : Esperanto, that's what The Suitable Toy is called. What did not expect me to say, Swedish or Burmese? Because of Dag Hammarskjöld or U Thant or Woody Allen or something? Theory says it empowers some victims to go active and get away from this or that hang-up or energy loss. Well Esperanto actually does this. It does it in human terms. It does it in its language and literature body. Even at the mundane language use level, it gives rights to the Insubordinate Affix, the word-part reworded.
16. *You would like to see the evidence?* : Yes, I do use Esperanto, I thought you'd never ask, have been using it for three decades, and can personally vouch for the fact – oh I'll be happy to set down this set at any modernism you choose, dear practitioners of the lit-crit-emoting industry some of whom claim to take with a pinch of seriousness the colourfully decolonisant banners fluttering on the Theory trucks – the fact that serious Esperantical visualizers of a non-discriminatory and renewable social order of earthling existence-sharing – nomadic, state-free, nature-respectful, gender-sensitive, standpoint-perceptive, therefore truly civic – have indeed delivered. Obviously and Theoretical worth her salt go and find out. We'll be happy to give you back all your cultural capital if you actually read *La Infana Raso* and *Poemo de Utroa* and still don't bite but merely continue to bark. I predict that you will start doing your own plain-earth visualizations of non-grasping life on non-possessioned turf.
17. *Questions of genre and other rhetorical devices to silence us*: No, this is not quite the Theory argument you expected, is it? Could it peradventure be, however, that your expectations reflect your not having noticed that, in his work on artificial languages, Umberto Eco ends up saying he really thinks Esperanto is It? No, this manifesto does not address what you seem to believe are the issues. Does it, on the other hand, lead you to wonder if these beliefs that hold you (come off it, surely you don't hold them, Mr Feynman!) are unexamined, precritical, and so forth? Could it be that, once you examine them in the way we suggest, you may find that this is after all a Theory argument?

18. *The connection with mutual hospitality*: Yes, Esperanto is about guesthood and hosthood of the precious mutual kind, which it practices in its very fibre and fluid. That this variant of flesh and blood comes unbidden to my lips means that the topic reminds me of a particular perceptive, theoretical, revisionary, and unexaminedly anti-Esperantical Anglicist who shall remain nameless here, apart from the specification that she invented this turn of phrase, Fibre and Fluid. What makes me think of that Indian member of the world of English studies? Just the fact that she has been outgrowing the handicapabilities of the Theoretical condition? Or the fact that the Theoretical tenets she continues to swear by, includes ideas of mutual intellectual and social hospitality, which the English-bound world prevents her friends from implementing? And the fact that this disturbs her?
19. *Are you sure all this is unexaminably weird?*: This is said in peace, of course. For what combat can issue at the point of a speech act emanating from what any Anglicist occupationally bound to prejudice as a powerless and charmingly crank-infested pre-theoretical location? Quite natural of you, gentle reader, to harbour these thoughts. But did you say you were into re-examining and occasionally even undoing what comes 'naturally'? Did I hear you claim not to belong to the mainstreams that decide who shall be tolerated as weird deviants unworthy of the honour of debate? You might try this weird region's hospitality. You may yet outgrow the belief that an agile recoding of flesh and blood as fibre and fluid will save English from its worship of predatory wit. You then begin to see that only in this community-built, continually-re-opened language Esperanto can one validly undertake a general dialogue on equal terms – leading towards a relay enterprise dreamt of in your Pretheory, my dearest Horatios. In your dreams, in case you didn't notice, begin your responsibilities, J.R.R.Tolkien, personal communication, note that this is not a commercial for William Auld's Esperanto translation of *The Lord of the Rings*.
- I. The above manifesto, offered in all seriousness to our literary theory inclined readers, and presented within tacit scare quotes to readers who this rhetoric if Used rather than Mentioned might intimidate, practices the captionism which point G starts thinking about. Thus H is to G what practice is to theory, in a serious theory-practice dyad. You are right to think that what has been said so far is skimpy. Let us flesh it out, in fact twice, once at J for Theoretical colleagues and

again at K in a more general context of conceptual labour. But the unpacking is quick to keep it painless. This may make it less useful. Fuller unpackings will have to be produced collaboratively. The present invitation may provide lines for such joint work to pursue.

- J. The mandate of linguistics enjoins us to relativize Writing to Speech. Thanks to the dialogical paradigm, at least some literary theorists feel accountable to the possibility that speech genres available in folk traditions may precede and underwrite all generic practices. I propose that we try to keep faith with these imperatives by connecting our thoughts on the relation between Speech the Informal and Writing the Formal to some more general conception of the relation between the speech like, pre-codal Generalized Reciprocity of social hospitality between subjectivities (often understood in terms of friendships, visits, parties, festivals, and other institutional forms) and various codified types of Real Economy of Serious Acts and their Products.

Folklore: Serching for Logistics

Debaprasad Bandyopadhyay

0. Prologue

This paper mainly concentrates on the (a) genesis of Folklore as a colonial subject, where *subjectification* of a discipline as well as *subjection* (in Foucauldian sense of the term) of an exonymous group called "folk" has taken place; (b) non-tenable distinction between folk-drama and classical theatre that otherwise reflects the power-relation; (c) examination of the oral-written distinction in course of distinguishing between folk and non-folk.

As (a) was elaborated in Bandyopadhyay (1995, 1999), the logistics of the hypothesis will be briefly discussed in the section-1, reiterating only the main arguments; Bandyopadhyay (1995, 1999, 2000) showed the illegitimacy and mythical (in Bartheian sense of the term, which is "at a time true and unreal") character of Folk language and folksong – classical song dichotomy. This is further elaborated here concentrating on the folk-drama and classical theatre distinction on the basis of subsumption-hypothesis. Thus (b) will be elaborated in section – 2. Section – 3 questions the literate-illiterate distinction to discuss (c)

1. Recapitulation

The construction of the category "folk" was born out of super-ordinate's gaze that de-sign-ates otherness in the form of a discipline. The dichotomous divisions between folk--non-folk, tribe--non-tribe, *sastriya--loukika* typically reflect the colonial pedagogy that constituted otherness by deploying different exonyms to peripheral other ignoring the ethno/endonyms as used by subalterns. In fact, these divisions between dominant centre and dominated periphery gave birth to some surrogated subjects like "Folklore" or "Anthropology" in contrast to the white man's epistemological fields like History, Sociology or Physiology. These subjects subjectify as well as objectify dominated and peripheral "other" in the way of surrogating "human beings". Reiterating the "logic"(!) of such dividing practices from Bandyopadhyay, 1995, literate-illiterate or oral-spoken dichotomy will be (re)examined by analyzing the epistemological discourse on such divisions.

The problem is with the imaginative boundary between this dichotomy. We must keep in mind, from the standpoint of enlightened science, that the limit or boundary of different epistemological fields needs to be enumerated or well defined, i.e., in this case, determination of folk-drama and nonfolk-drama must be determined according to the existing enlightened logic. However the construction of such boundary, diachronically, is not always transparent, but rather fuzzy; and on the other hand it reflects a tension (this tension will be revealed in section-3) of maintaining the boundary, though it cannot eliminate the fuzziness of boundaries.

2. An Elaboration: 'Folk'-Drama Versus Classical Theatre

In Utpal Dutta's *Tiner Toloar* (Simulated Sword, 1973), a Bangla drama placed in the context of late nineteenth century Bengal, there was a situation where a sweeper is blaming a director cum actor for not producing theatre basing on his sub-altern life. He condemned the simulated and non-original mimic representation of the then Bangla Theatre, which was an imitation of European realistic theatre. The sweeper clearly articulated his choices and preference to 'ramlila' (an open-air theatre depicting the killing of Ravana in the hands of Rama) and 'khEmTa' (a type of so-called non-classical dance) rather than that of simulated proscenium commercial theatre, borrowed from Europe in the nineteenth century Bengal.

From this situation, one distinction is clear that there are two types of theatre: one is poor's theatre, generally categorized as Folk-theatre and another one is richman's theatre or classical theatre. The distinction is obviously made on the basis of capital-investment. The question is: does this economic factor determine the epistemological status of the said distinction? Or, is there any qualitative difference between these two? Sarkar (1978, 1983), propounder of Third Theatre, vividly distinguished between these two by using ordinal numbers as he marked proscenium theatre as First theatre and Folk theatre as the Second.

In Bandyopadhyay (2000), it was argued that the folksong-classical song dichotomy cannot be elaborated on the basis of physical musical notes, because as a *ding an sich* both depend on the same notational structure. However, this distinction is made on the basis of super-ordinal sponsorship of one type of song over another. Bandyopadhyay (2000) depends on the Tagore – D.P. Mukherjee correspondences in this regard and introduced subsumption-hypothesis that maintains that sub-alterns create and that creation is hegemonically

subsumed by the superordinate; and superordinate sponsors, according to their choice and as a part of their selves, the product of 'other' by marking it with their own brand. The same thing is true in case of Folk theatre – classical theatre distinction. Let us examine the following statement of Girish Ghosh, an eminent actor and playwright of late 19th century and early 20th century Bengal as cited in Dutta, 1983:258:

....Thousands of spectators began to weep out of devotion (while witnessing the jatra-performance). One who blaming this type of acting for its unnatural exposition as there is no scene or props in the proscenium, does not know what she/he is saying. Those who are distinguishing between jatra (one type of so-called folk theatre where emotive acting is used) and theatre do not know that the plays of Shakespeare or Johnson were initially acted following the jatra-style....
(emphasis added)

Ghosh maintained that without using the extravagant stage-materials and depending on the script-writer's poetic description, the jatra-writers did their job excellently to communicate with the audience, but, according to him, the introduction of "realistic" theatre marred the charm of this *drsyakavya* (visual poetry). Here, we have found the distinction between realistic theatre introduced by colonial ruler and the indigenous theatre that non-realistically depended on the visual poetry. However, in the late 19th century Bengal, the indigenous genre of theatre maneuvered the "second order mechanical reproduction" (where one signifier signifies/imitates another signifier to simulate represented reality, à la Walter Benjamin) of European Theatre to give birth to a hybrid space, which is a common characteristics of colonial culture. One of the key features of hybrid space is the *epistemological amalgamation* (Bandyopadhyay, 1996) of two or many alien as well as competing notions.

Is it, as Bhabha may think, mimicry? As Homi Bhabha (1984) maintained that the comic turn from the high ideals of colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects, mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed and appropriated other as subject of difference or partial presence that is almost the same, but not quite, i.e., "not quite/ not white". Mimicry repeats rather than represents and appropriates the colonized other. In between mimicry and mockery, the area of colonial imitation comes as a

civilizing mission, though that is also threatened by its disciplined subjects.

At the first place, The civilizing mission of western theatre was threatened due to the amalgamation of indigenous theatric style, thus Whiteman as a supposed donor was appropriated. As Dutta (ibid) wrote:

The splendid success of Girish Ghosh as an experimental actor-director much depended on the amalgamation of traditional theatre, jatra and proscenium theatre. (It is heard that some people are now engaged themselves to do the same work in the name of third theatre, of amalgamating rural and urban genre without knowing that it was done much before their work of amalgamation.)

Therefore it is not mere mimicry, but an in/-vasion/-tervention into the donor's domain. The so-called "purity" of western theatre is disturbed: Rahu veils the Sun. When Guha (1985) depicted the Rahu-narrative in the light of some sub-altern texts, we found that the hero-villain relationship between Bisnu, the god and Rahu, the anti-god or demon was totally inverted from the subalterns' gaze. What is more important is that the supposed hero from the standpoint of super-ordinates' dominant and fantastic gaze is turned out to be the "hero" of thieves or rather dominant dacoits (thus a villain from the subalterns' gaze) who could subsume the others' share of the property (nectar that comes out of churning the ocean) without acknowledging others' toil. The same case of "snatching nectar" is also visible in the classical-folk theatre dichotomy.

On the other hand, it is mimicry, when the Folk-drama-theatre dichotomy is maintained keeping aside the hegemonic selving or subsumption of subaltern mode of representation. And it is also a mimicry from the part of classical theatre that is imitating the so-called folk-pattern. It is entailed that, as Ghosh maintained (see above), there is a clear distinction between realistic theatre and non-realistic jatra. However, the mechanical reproduction of supposed "reality" in the proscenium is an effect of imitation and thus it is mimicry itself.

And, if the European realistic theatre is reproduced in the colonial space by the colonized, it is a case of *double mimicry* as mimicry of reality is repeated in a form of parody in the realm of colonial space, therefore it is a pastiche of the second order mimic as well as mechanical reproduction of capitalist theatre. Dutta himself depicted such second order mimicry in his play *Tiner TOloar* (Simulated Sword),

when one of the character pointed out that one of the Bangla plays, which was going to be staged by the “Great Bengal Opera” (note the English name of a Bangla Theatre Group) is a synthesis of Hamlet and Macbeth. It is surprising to note that the plot of a new Bangla play is based on the plot of Hamlet and Macbeth! *Tiner TOloar* exploits this mimic representation of 19th century Bangla drama to reveal this second order mimicry.

The then print medium did not subscribe to this type of play not for the reason of second order mimicry, but for the reason of inclusion of a marginal group (prostitutes) as actresses as they are damaging the *jati* (Nation?) and religion (this historical fact is mentioned in the *Tiner TOloar*). This clearly reveals the colonial dividing practice. At the moment of birth of nation statist as well as print capitalist imagi-nation, it is important from the part of the mediators, who were in the process of constructing civil society, to decide who is marginal (like folk or prostitute) and who is non-marginal. Nation and its civil society provide separate space for folk to maintain the hegemony of the dominant non-marginal. News media, at the beginning of colonial period, as a part of print capitalism, decided the fate of *jati* and religion by deploying strategic principle of enumerated exclusion-inclusion: though they and their subsequent academia overlooked the contribution of so-called folk theatre in the formation of so-called classical theatre. What Mukherjee told us regarding folk-song – classical song dichotomy is also true for folk-classical theatre. Mukherjee's statement regarding such inclusion or coercive selving shows definite socio-political criteria:

If the burden of preserving the Indian culture was bestowed upon the priestly commune, then the cultural flow of India would be ended in the dry desert. However, that does not happen, thanks to the harijans. The creativity was achieved by them by going beyond the hands of brahmins. If the cultural stream of our land is still navigable, it is due to the mercy of harijans. Folksong injects its blood to the marga and darbari songs. The conservatives then showed their ingratitude. (Mukherjee, 1987:33, originally, Tagore, Mukherjee, 1935 [1342 Bangabda]).

It is noticeable that the musical notes used in the *jatras*, are purely so-called “classical”: *malkoS*, *deS*, *puria*, *bageśi*, *bhoyroM* etc. (Dutta, 1974/1998:395). Then the question is, if the amalgamated and syncretic spaces are visible in different categories and if the donor-receptor role-

reversal is the common characteristics, why should we maintain such dichotomy? Only to (a) maintain hierarchical social structure at par with nation statist politics; (b) hide the fact of capital investment; (c) to forget the contribution of sub-altern in the formation of so-called high art?

Bertolt Brecht did not hide his debt to Vienna and Bavaria's lyrical (Folk?) theatre and proletariat songs of Berlin! Why not we are now trying for "people's theatre" keeping aside classical-folk dichotomy or mundane mass theatre?

3. Illiterate?

In Satyjit Ray's film "Agantuk" ("The Stranger", 1991), a crucial question was raised regarding the civilizing mission of Europe and its supposed standard of "development". This question is very much relevant in determining the supposed boundary. Once Manomohan, the proselytizer of the film's message, cited the drawings of cavemen/women. According to him, the artistic skill of a "primitive" cave-man/woman, who once drawn the picture of a bison at the caves of Altamira in Spain, could not be compared with the skill of the artist of our civilized society : the cave(wo)man is far superior (even better than Leonardo) and that skill cannot be taught in our art school. Manomohan mentioned one "shaman" of a distant jungle, who knows the remedial use of almost five hundred medicinal plants. Manomohan (perhaps following Levi-Strauss) emphasized on the surprising knowledge of science and technology of the so called primitive wo/man. The question raised by him may be paraphrased as "Are *they* not literate? Are they not civilized?"

Much depends on the literacy and illiteracy for determining the distinctive features of the epistemological (?) dichotomy of "non-folk" and "folk". This particular feature "oral—non-oral", surely, has a connection to the enlightenment-project, in which official literacy plays a major role for the utilitarian "upliftment" of the peripheral other. As for example, Ton-nu, following Brunvand (1968, cited in Sengupta, 1975:48), in course of defining "Folk", suggested following definition for "folk": "Folklore is oral", i.e. it is a study of non-literate culture'.

If one tries to follow strict 'epistemo'-'logical' course of "begging the premise", one may find many a lacuna in this definition, because by this definition, Socrates and Buddha are men of folklore, and on the other hand Siddhas and Lalan Shah are non-folk as their songs were

preserved in the written forms. The total vedic culture is a folk culture as per this definition. *Mahabharata* was written by a non-aryan deity Ganesa, who took notes dictated by Vyasa. This may entail that Vyasadeva was an illiterate scholar. The expression “illiterate scholar” may seem paradoxical from the standpoint of enlightened science. Pedagogy and literacy are judged from the monolithic norms of Europe and not from the pluricultural standpoints.

Dundes (1965:1-2), realizing these lacks in the definition, pointed out :

...language, hunting techniques and marriage rules are passed orally from one generation to another, few folklorist would say there cultural material are folklore...second, there are some forms of folklore which are manifested and communicated almost exclusively in written form as opposed to oral form, such as autograph-book verse, book marginalia, epitaphs...a professional folklorist does not go so far as to say that a folktale or a ballad is not a folklore simply because it has at sometime in its life-history been transmitted by writing or print...The third difficulty with the criterion of oral transmission concerns those forms of folklore depending upon body movements; That is there is some questions as to whether folk dances, games and gestures passed on orally.

Dundes aptly includes the archewriting of different kinds in the description of folklore, though he maintained the paradigm that still constitutes “otherness”. Derrida thought otherwise, “... [t]he peoples said to be “without writing” lack only a certain type of writing. To refuse the name of writing to this or that technique of consignment is the ‘ethnocentrism that best defines the pre-scientific vision of man’....” (1976:83). This gaze that distinguishes ‘pre-scientific’ and scientific is a product of enlightenment-project, which subjugates Asia, Africa, Latin America, though they themselves are the propagators of “free will”. Derrida also argued for other techniques of writings, not similar to Eurocentric alphabetic writing-technique. Derrida searched for archewritng, which is also a mode of representation not similar to Saussurian sense of the term.

4. Epilogue

Folklore is one of the disciplinary technologies that only applies to the colonies of both internal and external kind. Europe itself possesses folklore and European Folklore is applicable to its internal colonies which are not within the realm of civil society. In case of external colonization, Europe declared, "We have History, you have Anthropology." This small paper tries to depart from that paradigm. The problem is that the voice of third world is seldom (if not never) heard. If we then have to believe Spivak (1988), we have also to believe that sub-altern cannot speak. The word "sub-altern" includes the colonized inappropriate subjects encompassing third world local writers (representing South/East axis). The colonization of the third world intellectuals makes them, according to Spivak, illegitimate child of the west (not only human subject but also an academic subject as a discipline is also an illegitimate child) : a person without a voice of him/her-self, a person who cannot speak globally; a person playing with translated derivatives. This paper may be an example of Spivak's statement. However, in the play *Tiner TOloar*, a sweeper articulated his own problem with the theatre. Is it a construct of the playwright or a spontaneous one?

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The Tradition of Dissent in Indian Poetry

K. Satchidanandan

The history of Indian literature has been a history of continuities and discontinuities, consolidation of authority and conflict with it, the hegemony of tradition and innovative heresy, in short, of power and subversion. It is possible to look at these trends as two dialectical if not anti-thetical streams or first and second traditions of our literature. With some risk of generalisation I would like to call this second stream the *Sramana* tradition as opposed to the first that is primarily a Vedic/*Brahmana* tradition. The conflict here, let me clarify at the very outset, is between two world views or ideological systems, not between religions or castes; and one's tradition is more a matter of conscious choice and intellectual construction than of mere birth. Proofs of the profound struggle between the two *weltanschauungs* can be found in the writings of Patanjali, Buddhist and Jaina thinkers, Ashoka's edicts, Megasthenis, ancient Chinese pilgrims like Huen-tsang and in the Arab documents of second century A.D. that speak of two religious traditions of India called *Brahma* and *Samanya*. These two streams however have not always remained in conflict but have also had dialogues and interactions so that they are often found interwoven in the history of our thought and of literature. In later times the two kinds of attitudes were called *Pravrtti-dharma* and *Nivrtti-dharma*. Classical Brahmanical tradition as well as some modern historians attribute both the outlooks to the Vedic tradition—*Pravrtti* to the ritualistic side of the Vedic religion and *Nivrtti* to its agnostic side, or to *Karma-Kanda* and *Jnana-kanda* respectively. Modern scholars like Jacobi and Oldenberg attribute the gnostic and ascetic traditions of Indian spirituality to a reformist school within the Vedic tradition evidenced by the Upanisadic literature as also by the *dharmaśūtras*. Buddhist and Jaina ascetics are then believed to continue this reformist and anti-ritualistic trend. Against this, some scholars (e.g., R.P. Chanda, S.K. Chatterji, G.C. Pande) attribute them to different ethnic traditions, Aryan and non-Aryan, the ascetic tradition being attributed to the latter. Some other scholars attribute the rise of the ascetic movements to the social changes implicit in the break-up of tribal society, rise of classes and castes and the various changes ushered in by the Second Urban Revolution. Whatever be the origin of the distinction between *Pravrtti* and *Nivrtti*, the

distinction itself is of vital importance in the understanding of composite Indian culture that has its own inner dialectic. G.C. Pande points to a vedic phase emphasising *Pravrtti*, a post-Vedic phase of ascetic movements emphasising *Nivrtti* and beyond it, a phase of synthesis that led to the creation of an almost uniform religion of asceticism and devotionism in the medieval period.

The *sramanik* idea of a beginningless cycle of lives governed by an overarching law of *karman* from which freedom could come only by the total renunciation of all the claims and impulses of instinctive life falls outside the purview of early Vedic thought. The upanisadic point of view is a space of possible interaction between *Brahmanism* and *Sramanism* that became real later and had its impact on the origin and development of Buddhism, *Sankhya* and *Vedanta* for, the Upanisads transmute the idea of gods in the Vedas without adopting an atheistic point of view, and seek emancipation from the cycle of existence. One can trace a movement away from the Vedic philosophy to the very early Upanisads like *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya* that culminated in spiritual monism and a devaluation of the non-spiritual world of names and forms. The seventh chapter of *Chandogya* also connects *brahmajijnasa* with the realisation of the sorrowfulness of life, an idea later developed by Buddhist and Jaina thought. The disappearance of the distinction between the subject and the object, the knower and the knowledge, discussed in the *Brihadaranyaka* also foreshadows the Buddhist idea of *nirvana*. *Vijnana* according to the *Vijnanavadins* yields place to *Vijnaptimatratra* once one transcends the *grahya-grahaka bhava*. That desire is the source of *samsara* and in its absence *karman* does not bind is a principle propounded by Yajnavalkya in *Brihadaranyaka* and also by early Buddhist texts like *Suttanipata*. The distinction drawn by *Kathopanishad* between sensuous pleasures and the true good of man – *anitya* and *nitya*, *adhruva* and *dhruva*, *preyas* and *sreyas*, *bala* and *dhira* – also became important to *sramana* poetry later on. The *Sankhya* thought also is close to the *Sramanic* tradition in that unlike in the Vedas that trace the universe to a sentient, divine being (*Purushavada*), the *Sankhya* stands for a doctrine of material or natural transformations (*Pradhanavada*). While even some Upanisads uphold an optimistic worldview that is almost vedic (e.g; *Mundaka* says: *visvam idam varistham*, this is the best of all worlds; *Katha* advises satisfaction of all desires and recognition of the world). *Sankhya* counts even the supreme happiness of contentment as part of *duhkha* and seeks absolute liberation from it. However several parts of *Katha*

and *Mundaka* echo *sramanic* ideas like the contempt for sacrifices and rituals described as frail boats by *Mundaka* and the celebration of the *munis*, *yatis* and *bhaikshacharyas* of the forest. The *sramanic* idea of the renunciation of action is also found in the *Isopanisad*.

Morality according to the *Sramanas*, lies in conduct, in the equanimous, luminous and untroubled modification of the soul. As a form of self-consciousness, morality synthesises subjectivity and objectivity seeking to realize the ideal and idealize the real. While the Vedic idea of morality stands for a cycle of ritual giving and receiving and stresses man's social dependence through the notion of obligation, *sramanism* cuts man loose from the dependence on the gods, replacing them with *karman*. What man receives he owes not to gods but to his own past actions and efforts. The individual himself is responsible for the actions and cannot avoid their moral consequences. It is not the cultivation of natural faculties and satisfaction of instincts, but the transcendence of natural faculties and satisfaction of instincts, but the transcendence of natural and social personality that raises him above the ordinary. If sterility and niggardliness are the main evils in the Vedic tradition, pleasure-seeking, egoism and violence are the main evils in the *sramanic* view. *Sramanism* advocates asceticism, for the *Mahavratas* (to use a Jain term) but for the *Anuvratas*, the laity, it advocates an ideal of spiritually inclined ethical humanism which is a valuable complement to the point of view of mendicancy as it prepares the soul for rigorous contemplation. While Brahmanical morality is bound up with religious and ritual observations and the fulfilment of traditional social obligations, *sramanic* tradition rejects much of the traditional ritual, emphasizes inward morality and accepts social obligations not as something absolute but as something which provides an occasion for the practice of certain voluntarily accepted moral laws. In the Vedic tradition the universe is the expression of a personal will. In the *sramanic* tradition, it is determined by an impersonal natural law. It stresses the inexorableness of the moral law. Prayers and worship are of no avail against the force of *karman*. Only purification of feelings leads to inward illumination. While in vedic view illumination comes from outside, from an eternally revealed word or from the grace of God, in *Sramanism* the consolation of a personal God is replaced by the individual dependent on his own resources and guided by a teacher. The world here is seen as ever-existent, without originaries. Asoka's *dhamma* represents the quintessence of *sramanism* as it rejects rituals and emphasises non-violence, self-control, equal respect for all beings,

mercy, liberality, truthfulness, purity and moderation. It constitutes a system of universal, rational and ethical religion that is wholly non-sectarian. Dharmakirti finds belief in the validity of the Vedas, pride of caste, violence and expecting ethical merit from ablutions to be four signs of folly. In *Sonadanda Sutta* we find a dialogue between a Brahmin and the Buddha where finally the Brahmin admits that what really makes a person a Brahmana are conduct and learning – *śila* and *panditya* while *varna*, *jati* and *mantra* are not indispensable. The Buddha says that all men have the same potentiality for moral and spiritual progress even as the same bright fire is produced by all kinds of wood. The source of Brahmanahood is not birth, family, Vedic learning or profession, but purity of heart and other spiritual qualities. Asvaghosa also argues that all men belong to the same race; *varna* is only a functional division (“*kriyavisesena khalu caturvarna-vyavastha kriyatel*”). Vaisampayana also says originally it was one race (“*eka-varnamidam purvam*”). In the dialogue between Yudhisthira and the python in the *Ajagaraparvan* of the *Vanaparvan* of *Mahabharata*, too, a Brahmana is defined as one who evinces truth, liberality, forbearance, virtue, mildness, austerity and pity; all men are born *sudras* and attain *brahmanahood* through conduct. The supreme end of man is described as one that is free from pain and pleasure – “*nirdukkhamasukham ca yat.*”

While the Brahmanic ideology believes in the monopolisation of knowledge, mystification of spirituality and the employment of the languages of the elite, the Sramanas believe in democratising knowledge, extending spirituality to the subaltern castes and classes and speaking in the people’s tongues. The Brahmanic ideology shows all the characteristics of a hegemonic religion: to create unnatural divisions among the people and to perpetuate that division by legitimising it as natural and God-created, to be close to the centres of power, to create actual laws that perpetuate inequality, to give rise to mechanisms that turn people into subjects and mould their subjectivity accordingly. These are also the features of what Michele Foucault calls ‘pastoral power’ in the Western Christian context. In the Sramanic tradition religion, instead of a means to attain earthly power, becomes a means of self-knowledge, social justice and revolt against oppressive modes of subjectification. If we use Brahman and Sraman as Indian metaphors that represent the hegemonic and the subaltern respectively, it is possible to analyse the dynamics of India’s intellectual, cultural and literary history in terms of the conflicts and dialogues between the two

traditions. It is also possible then to trace an unbroken counter-hegemonic Sramanic stream in Indian literature – which admittedly has co-existed with the hegemonic stream and has at times allowed itself to be enriched by it – right from the tribal poetry of the original inhabitants of India, the Indian folklore, the Buddha-Jaina literatures, and the Bhakti-Sufi poetic movement to the poetry of egalitarian aspirations in modern times that include feminist, eco-oriented and Dalit streams of poetry besides that of several protest movements based on gender, class, caste, region and language. It is also possible to build up a parallel poetics of resistance – as different from classical Sanskrit and modern Western poetics – based on the practitioners of this poetry of dissent.

Bhakti as a Moment of Liberation

The Bhakti Movement saw a great revival and re-inforcement of the Sramanic tradition of spiritual enquiry, subaltern religiosity and social protest. 'Bhakti' was by no means a monolithic movement: it was a polyphonic movement spread over fourteen centuries – from the 6th to 19th which accommodated conservatives as well as radicals. But even the conservatives like Tulsidas, the author of *Ramcharitmanas* who supported the status-quoist hierarchy based on *varna*, succeeded in creating a new poetic idiom with fresh dimensions of imagination. Some radical groups like the *Varkaris* of Marathi that included Namdev, Tukaram, Chokhamela and others, the *Veerashaivas* or *lingayats* of Karnataka that included Basavanna, Akka Mahadevi, Allama Prabhu and others and the Radhasaomi Movement that included Swami Dayal singh and Anand Swarup actually created alternative communities based on principles of perfect equality of caste, creed and gender. The movement included Brahmins like Ekanath and Jnandev of Maharashtra, Chaitanya of Bengal/Orissa or Sankardev of Assam who de-brahminised themselves following *Sramana* ideology, *Soodras* and *avarnas* or *atisoodras* who approved of Brahmin superiority like Ezhuthacchan of Kerala and also marginalised sections like non-brahmin craftsmen, muslims and women who developed a subaltern, egalitarian vision of the new society like Dadu the cotton-carder, Namdev the tailor, Chowdayya the ferryman, Chokhamela the Mahar, Gora the potter, Ravi (Rai) das the tanner, Kabir the weaver, the Sufis like Sheikh Farid, Bulhe Shah and Sultan Bahu and women saints like Karaykkal Ammayar, Andal, Janabai, Bahinabhai, Gangasati, Lal Ded, Muktayakka, Mirabai and others. There were *Vaishnavites*, *Shaivites* and *Sakteyas* among them, there were also the followers of the *nirguna*

cult and practitioners of *tantra*. However, they have enough common features to lend them the appearance of a movement. Some of these, applicable to most of the Bhakti writers and movements are (1) they have a predilection for pre-Aryan patterns of life and thought as implied in its rejection of Brahmin privilege, its egalitarian content and the tribal character of its collective worship, (2) they emphasised the similarities among different religions, found them to be only different paths leading to the same goal and even attempted syntheses of religions as in Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak and the Sufi cults, (3) most of them rejected the *varna-jati* system and the Brahmin superiority, (4) they problematised the institution of priesthood by directly addressing God, (5) they privileged the oral tradition against the written, (6) they gave up Sanskrit and chose to compose in regional languages and dialects, (7) many of them travelled widely and were multi-lingual (e.g. Meera, Kabir, Nanak, Namdev, Vidyapati), (8) they created or introduced several new forms like *doha*, *pada*, *vachana*, *bijak*, *vakh*, *abhang*, *bharud*, *barahmasa*, *qasida*, *rasa* and *prabandha* and also several group performances like *kirtan*, *bhajan*, *dhun*, *jatra*, *harikatha*, *burrakatha*, *angkiyanat*, *nagarsankirtana*, *lila*, *thungi*, *Ramleela* and *Krishnaleela* which gave rise to several classical and semi-classical forms later like *kathakali*, *thullal*, *yakshagana*, *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Manipuri* and *Odissi*, (9) poetry and philosophy co-existed and supported each other and the barriers between the physical and the metaphysical became thin in their aesthetic-religious practice, (10) they developed a symbolism of their own mixing traditional symbols like sky, river, tree, fire, bird etc. with symbols chosen from the kitchen and the workplace like the loom, wheel, knife, ladle, bellows, veil, sindoor etc, (11) they replaced the Vedic gods mostly by pre-Aryan gods and goddesses. In short it was a comprehensive cultural revolution with profound ideological, aesthetic and practical implications that attempted to create an alternative religion of the people articulating subaltern aspirations.

The Movement exhibited most of these features in its very initial phase in the Tamil Bhakti poetry of the 6th to 13th Century, especially of the Siddhas or Cittars qualified by Rev. Robert Caldwell the linguist as 'the anti-Brahmanical cycle' of compositions. Thirumular, the Sixth century mystic proclaimed in a famous verse, 'Caste is one and God is one' (Verse 2104). His *Thirumantiram* deals primarily with Yoga and Tantra. He decried bigotry and preached equanimity and love in an age when Vedic and non-Vedic religions, Shaivism and Vaishnavism, Shaivasiddhanta and Sankara's Vedanta quarrelled with each other:

*'Those who follow the six religions know him not
Nor is he confined to those six faiths.
Seek, and having sought cogitate in your mind
And then without doubt you will gain salvation'*

(Verse 1533)

K. Kailasapathy points out that there are more than fifty names associated with the Siddha School of Poetry. Strangely, Gorakh appears in the list of Siddhas and there is a traditional belief that Tirumular came from Kashmir and some other Siddhas came from Arabia, China and other distant lands; two Sufis Pir Muhamed and Mastan Sahib are also listed among them. What interests us here is that orthodox Shaiva Siddhantists held the Siddhas to be religious *panchamas* or outcastes. The Siddhas challenged the very foundations of medieval Hinduism; the authority of the Shastras, the validity of rituals and the basis of the caste system were often questioned by them. To quote Kamil Zvelebil, "almost all of them manifest a protest, expressed often in very strong terms, against the formalities of life and religion; denial of religious practices and beliefs of the ruling classes". These sentiments are forcefully expressed by the poem of Chivavakkiyar:

*'The chanting of the four Vedas,
The meticulous study of the sacred scripts
The smearing of the holy ashes
And the muttering of prayers
Will not lead you to the Lord!...
....You dumb fools performing the rituals
With care and in leisurliness.
Do gods ever become stone?
What can I do but laugh?'*

(Chittar Jnanakkovai Verse 121)

*'Of what use are temples,
And of what use are sacred tanks?'*

(Ibid, Verse. 29)

Pambatti Chittar also ridicules those fools who think that the flaw in a pan will go away if you rub it with tamarind. He goes on:

*'We'll set fire to devisions of caste
We'll debate philosophy in the market places
We'll have dealings with despised households
We'll go around in different paths'* (Ibid Verse 123)

The Siddhas often refuted the theory of transmigration and rebirth too. Chivavakkiyar says: "Milk does not return to the udder/ Likewise butter can never become butter-milk;/ The sound of the conch does not exist once it is broken;/ The blown flower, the fallen fruit, do not go back to the tree;/ The dead are never born again, never!" (Ibid Verse 43)

A grand remonstrance against almost everything that was held sacred characterises these poems. One reason for this dissent may lie in the caste/class origins of most of the Siddhas. Tradition tells us they included shepherds, temple-drummers, artificers, robbers, potters, fishermen, hunters, weavers, washermen, oil-pressers, pariahs and others. *Periya Puranam* the hagiographical work of the 12th century that narrates the lives of sixty-three Shaiva saints, supports this. Sikkilar, the author, a minister in the Chola court, portrays the saints overcoming their caste origins and attaining spiritual glory through a life of dedication and love. They were well below the Brahmans, Vellalas (agriculturists) and Vanigas (merchants) who constituted the ruling class in those times. They believed in brotherhood, disbelieved idol-worship and believed in a supreme Abstraction rather than a supreme Person. By imagining an impersonal Godhead, they freed themselves of rituals and other average Hindu observances. They attempted a synthesis of apparently diverse elements of Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga. Like the Indian Sufis, they rejected the mechanical and dreary aspects of Bhakti and cherished love, tenderness and compassion.

The poetry of the Siddhas is sustained by the simple colloquial expressions and speech patterns of the common people. It lacks the 'grammatical finesse' exalted in traditional poetry. These poets did not mind using even 'vulgar' and 'obscene' words; it was a language in which words are on purpose semantically polyvalent. In spite of their obscurities and profundities, the poems were accessible to any native speaker of the language. Over the centuries the Siddhas developed a cryptic, coded, secret, symbolic language of their own best suited for oral transmission. Images, myths, symbols and histories were deployed by them for communicating their ineffable experience. Their tantric orientation also led them to the use of sexual symbols. Man-Woman intimacy is often used here to express the God-Soul relationship. Manikkavachakar's *Thirukkovaigar* reads almost like a poem of love, separation and union. It is erotic and allegoric at the same time. The Siddhas were indifferent to accepted language or respectability in modes of expression as they found the established 'literary' culture oppressive. They framed an idiom that was private and colloquial at the

same time, full of paradoxes, witticisms, wisecracks, epigrams and earthy adages. Their use of terse and telling phrases soon passed into the common language. They revolutionized Tamil religious-philosophic poetry by bringing into its world the language of folklore, a bold device that became irrevocable. It survived the neglect of the mainstream scholars to be revitalised by Subramania Bharati, Bharatidasan, Turaiyappa Pillai and others. In the best tradition of mystics, they transcended the polarisations of life and literature by mixing the sacred with the profane, the spiritual experience with the external event. Look at this puzzle-like poem by Tirumular:

*I sowed eggplant seed: jack sprouted
I dug the dust; the pumpkin blossomed
The garden folk took it away merrily;
What was fully ripe was the banana fruit.*

In this apparently absurd poem, the eggplant seed is yogic practice, the jacktree connotes freedom from worldly desires; digging the dust means philosophical speculations; the pumpkin flower signifies shivam manifesting itself, the garden folk are the sense organs, ripening is obtaining and the banana fruit is spiritual gain.

The Siddhas created and adopted several forms that suited the unorthodox, rebellious, non-conformist and incisive content of their poetry. They used traditional meters outlined in the *Tholkappiyam* the pre-Christian treatise on grammar and poetics, like *akaval*, (used in narratives) *Venpa* (for didactical works) and some variations of *Kalippa* (for love poetry and choral music), the fourth meter they did not use being *vanchippa* (for descriptive situations). But they also exploited metrical forms that had no literary or grammatical sanction. They adapted melodies, tunes and meters of folksongs and workers' songs. Idaikkattu Chittar, for example, composed many songs in the form of shapherds' dialogues suggesting a pastoral milieu, Pambatti Chittar followed the model of snake-charmers' songs. Many Siddha songs are in the pliable and popular *chintu* form, with two-line stanzas often broken into four half-lines with initial or end-rhyme. Persons, animals, birds and things are directly addressed by the poet. Some poets came to be known by the refrains they used like Akappey Chittar (*akappey*; 'the devil of the mind) or Kutampai Chittar (*kutampai*, literally an ear-ring, metonymically a girl wearing it). *Kummi*, a dance-song form and *kanni*, a two-line stanza form were popularised respectively by Kaduveli Chittar and Pattinattar. Form and content were inseparable in their

poetry. Sufi mysticism easily co-existed with Siddha philosophy; medieval Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka have several cult sites that are the graves of Muslim sufi saints and pirs. Many celebrated Hindu shrines of Skanda are believed to have been constructed on or near the tombs of Muslim Sufi Saints as these sites were considered sacred, and the dead saints propitious. Their non-sectarian, anti-establishment philosophy unflinchingly critical of smug religiosity and the oral lore they used together made them extremely popular, they became the voice of the voiceless.

The Siddhas also considered the body sacred. The body according to Thirumular is not only a fit instrument for the progress of the soul in its spiritual journey but it is the actual abode of God: 'The mind is the sacred chamber / the physical body is the temple / for my gracious Lord the mouth is the tower gate.' He also says, 'Those who let the body decay destroy the spirit.... I fostered the body, and I fostered the soul'. This is in contrast to much of the mainstream religious teachings that decry the body as evil and unholy. This robust acceptance of life and of physicality must also have endeared them to the common people who led a life of tedium. There was a stoic acceptance even of the saddest experience of life in the Siddhas barring a few passimists among them. Thirumular has this famous line, 'May the world be as happy as I am'. The Siddhas, in short, were the harbingers of a vigorous and germane counter-tradition that is part of the dialectics of our cultural history. By 'counter-tradition' I mean what Louis Kampf means by it: not one 'that opposes tradition,' but the 'tradition that opposes'.

For the Veersaiva (or Lingayata) poets religion was not a given, it was something to be attained through faith and constructed through a life style. Thus it was not a question of chance, but of choice. Hence change and conversion are possible here. Several scholars (Sisir Kumar Das, Birinchikumar Barua, A.K. Ramanujan) have compared this movement to Lutheran reformation that critiqued the Roman Church and provoked the clergy. Lingayatism emerged as a militant religious movement during the reign of the Kalachurya King, Bijjala-II (1100-1167). The rule of Kalachuryas was characterised by the dominance of traditional Brahmanical Hindu values, a social system based on caste and a polity and economy governed by feudal principles. Three mutually reinforcing institutions - the court, the temple and the Mahajana Agrahara settlement - supported the Kingdom. The traditional Shaivism of the Kalamukha priests had become indistinguishable from the mainstream Brahmanical Hinduism that perpetuated hierarchy,

exploitation and superstition. Lingayatism while being Shaivite negated the status-quoist brand of Shaivism. Basavanna, its master-organiser, wanted to overthrow this exploitative order and replace it with a new society based on freedom, equality, rationality and brotherhood. Basava's *Vachanas* (prose-lyrics) are replete with caustic comments on the institution of caste. E.g. "To him who has self-understanding there is but one caste." (Vachana, 878: Tr.R.C. Hiremath) or "The birthless has no caste distinctions, no ritual pollution"(No.417) or "The murderer is an untouchable, the eater of filth is untouchable!"(No.590). K. Ishwaran points out that the equality of man is associated with his equal right to have access to God. Thus man's belief in God becomes the basis of Basava's egalitarianism. Further, the assumption of equality is related to individuality, since a man should be judged not by the ascriptive criterion of who he is but rather by the achievement criterion of what he has done. He asks in a popular *vachana*: "Of what avail the reading of the veda? Listening to *Sastras*? Performing ritual meditation? (No.598). Again, "Shall I call *Sastra* great? It glorifies Karma. Shall I call Veda great? It enjoins animal sacrifices". He points to the futility of orthodox Hindu modes of knowledge and comes close to a form of naturalistic humanism. He rejects the notions of Karma and rebirth and questions bookish religion:

*Sir, isn't the mind witness enough
for the taste on the tongue?
Do buds wait for the garlandmakers' word
to break into flower?
Is it right, Sir, to bring out the texts
for everything?
And, Sir, is it really right to bring into open
the mark on our vitals left by our lord's love-play?*
(No.848, Tr. A.K. Ramanujan)

He decries also the concepts of heaven and hell: 'There is no other heaven and hell / Truth-speaking is heaven, lying hell. / Performance of right conduct, heaven; its non-performance, hell' (No.239, Tr.R.C. Hiremath). He recommends a rigorous commitment to empirical reality and rejects escapism: 'Let what is supposed to come tomorrow come to us today itself./ What is supposed to come today, come to us this moment' (No.696). Basava asked the people not to take threats of punishment from Brahmins based on supernatural mechanisms and said

that sin and merit – *papa* and *punya* – are creatures of our fashioning. He also pointed to the gulf between precept and practice of the upper castes: 'They tread one path while their *Sastra* treads another' (No.574). *Sansara* was salvation for him and the only community was the universal community of man:

*Our untouchable Channayya is my father,
Drummer Kakayya is grandpa,
Look, Chikkayya is our father,
Flutiest Bommayya is brother.
How can they not know me?*

The body was important to him also as to the Siddhas:

*Make my body the beam of a lute,
of my head the sounding gourd
of my nerves the strings
of my fingers the plucking rods.
Clutch me close
and play your thirty-two songs
O lord of the meeting rivers!*

Again,

*'The rich will make temples for Siva.
What shall I, a poor man, do?
My legs are pillars, the body the shrine
The head a cupola of gold.
Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
Things standing shall fall
But the moving ever shall stay*

(No.820)

The last two lines reassert the poet's faith in life, movement and change. The stoic acceptance of suffering we found in the Siddhas recurs here: 'He'll grind till you're fine and small. / He'll file till your colour shows./If your grain grows fine in the grinding./if you show colour in the filing, / then our lord of the meeting rivers / will love you and look after you' (No.686). Basava laughed at the multiplicity of gods in India: 'The pot is a god. The winnowing fan is a god. The stone in the street is a god. /The comb is a god./ The bowstring is also a god. The bushel is a god and the spouted cup is a god. Gods, gods, there are so many, there's no place left for a foot' (No.563). He laughed at religious

rituals and customs like holy baths and sacrifices: 'They plunge wherever they see water./They circumambulate every tree they see./How can they know you, O Lord, / who adore waters that run dry, trees that wither? (No.581) or 'In a brahmin house where they feed the fire as a god, / when the fire goes wild and burns the house, / they splash on it the water of the gutter / and the dust of the street / beat their breasts / and call the crowd. / These men then forget their worship / and scold their fire' (No.586). He said he cannot believe in a god who ate up lacquer and melted and wilted before fire, or a god that people sold in their need or buried for fear of thieves.

The celebration of the nobility of human labour was another feature of Basava's poetry as well as Veerasaiva philosophy. One *vachana* says, 'Kayaka is Kailasa'. Kayaka is not only the labour for livelihood; it is work for the society. The fruit of labour is to be shared by others. Community co-operation is built into Basava's idea of the work ethic. Basava's efforts to build an alternative community along with the *saranas*, his devoted colleagues based on modern values was as important as his attempts to revive the oral tradition and employ spoken language instead of Sanskrit to communicate his message. The institution *Dasoha* also tended to generate a sense of sharing between free and rational individuals. The love the *vacanakaras* preached went beyond the human race and had an ecological and cosmic dimension. Dasareswara says in one of his Vachanas:

*Knowing ones lowliness
at every word;
the spray of insects in the air
in every gesture of the hand,
things living, things moving
come sprung from the earth
under every footfall;
and when holding a plant
or joining it to another
or in the letting it go
to be all mercy
to be light
as the dusting brush
of peacock feathers:
such moving, such awareness
is love that makes us one,
with the Lord Dasreswara*

Dasreswara did not even pick flowers to offer them to a god; he gathered only blossoms that fell of themselves. A Kannada saying asks, 'Where is religion without loving-kindness?' The *Vachanas* express kinship with all things, love of man and bird and beast and tree. Basava laughs at those who say 'Pour, pour the milk!' when they see a snake image in stone and cry 'Kill, kill!' when they meet a real snake. The Veerasaivas shared the principle of *Ahimsa* with Buddhism and Jainism though they rejected the determinist idea of *Karma* with its inexorable chain of action and consequence that bound individuals with no hope of grace and also opposed the special privileges Jains enjoyed in contemporary society. Basavanna and Dasimayya desperately struggled against Brahminism and Jainism and had to suffer its consequences. The *Vachanakaras* privileged experience over the received (*Sruti*) and the remembered (*Smriti*). Chowdayya the Ferryman says: 'When the winds of the Lord's grace lash, quickly quickly winnow, winnow' ('winnow when the wind blows' is a common proverb in many languages). This grace cannot be purchased by offerings to god and priest, temple-going, pilgrimage, ritual, following sacred space and sacred time: Veerasaivas were horrified of the bargaining and the manipulation involved in the regular religious practices and believed purely in the Divine Experience that one can only wait for. They believed in an unmediated vision. Like the European Protestants, they returned to what they felt was the original inspiration of the ancient traditions. A.K. Ramanujan, following Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process*), calls the Veerasaiva movement - like some other Bhakti movements - an 'anti-structure' developed out of the elements of the structure they reject. Here the hierarchy of the Guru, the Elders and the Novices is based on mystical achievement and not on birth or occupation. Like the Siddhas, Veerasaivas came from all classes and castes - laundrymen, boatmen, leather workers etc.

Like the Siddhas, the *Vachanakaras* also produced their own form of poetry with its implied oral poetics. As against *sruti* (what is heard) and *smriti* (what is memorised), the *Vachana* is something uttered here and now. A.K. Ramanujan says: Both the classical (in Sanskrit and in the regional languages) and folk literature of India work with well-established languages of convention, given personae, and elaborate metrical patterns that mediate and depersonalize literary expression. The literary ideal is impersonality. But *vachanas* are personal literature, personal in several senses:

- (a) Many of them express the real conflicts of real persons, represent a life more fully than anything in the older literature. For instance, Basavanna speaks of himself as the minister of a non-Virasaiva king, accused by his own men of betraying his god for a king.
- (b) They are uttered, not through a persona or mask, but directly in the person of the poet himself, in his native local dialect and idiom, using the tones and language of personal conversation or outcry.
- (c) Even the few given conventional stances of bhakti are expressed in terms of deeply-felt personal relations; the loves and frustrations of bhakti are those of lover and beloved (e.g., Mahadevi), mother and child, father and son, master and servant, even whore and customer.

Compared to other Indian religious literatures like the Vedic hymns, the vachanas describe the devotee's state directly and the god only by implication; the concern is with the subject rather than the object (of worship).

Though medieval Kannada was rich in native Dravidian metres, and in borrowed Sanskrit forms, no metrical line or stanza is used in *vachanas*. The saints did not follow any of these models. Basavanna said:

*I don't know anything like timebeats and metre
nor the arithmetic of strings and drums;
I don't know the count of iamb and dactyl.
My lord of the meeting rivers,
As nothing will hurt you
I'll sing as I love.*

(No. 949)

It is not even he that sings; the Lord sings through him.

The *vachana* is thus a rejection of premeditated art, the *sthavaras* of form. It is not only a spontaneous cry but a cry for spontaneity – for the music of a body given over to the lord.

The traditional time-beat, like the ritual gesture, was felt to be learned, passive, inorganic; too well organized to be organic. Here too, the *sthavara*, the standing thing, shall fall, but the *jangama* shall prevail.

However in the free-seeming verse, there are always patterns that loom and withdraw, figures of sound that rhyme and ring bells with the

figures of meaning. It is not surprising that M. Chidananda Murti has shown how the *vachana* metre actually has a *tripadi*-base. *Tripadi* is a popular 3-line form of the oral tradition used widely both in folk song and in folk epigram.

Scholars like Parry and Lord have studied the techniques of oral verse-making in folk-epics. They have paid little attention to shorter forms. Several features noted for heroic oral poetry do appear in the *vachanas*: in particular a common stock of themes that occur in changing forms, repetitions of phrases and ideas, the tendency to cycles or sequences of poems. But the extensive use of formulae and substitutes in the strict sense and a distinct given prosody, both characteristic of the oral bardic traditions, are generally absent in the *vachana*, a genre of epigram and lyric.

The *vachanakaras*, however, did use stock phrases, proverbs, and religious commonplaces of the time. This stock, shared by Southern and Northern saints, the Upanishads and the folk alike, included figures, symbols and paradoxes often drawn from an ancient and pan-Indian pool of symbiology.

Yet it should not be imagined that the common stock was used in exactly similar ways. Only the components were the same; the functions, the emerging meanings, were often startlingly different. For instance, the image of the insect weaving a web out of its body is an ancient one. The *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad* has this description of Brahman, the creator:

*As a spider emerges (from itself) by
(spinning) threads [out of its own body]
So too from this self do all the life-breaths,
all the worlds, all the gods, and all contingent beings
rise up in all directions.*

Mahadeviyakka has the following:

*Like a silkworm weaving
her house with love
from her marrow,
and dying
in her body's threads
winding tight, round
and round,
I burn*

*Desiring what the heart desires.
Cut through, O lord,
My heart's greed,
And show me
Your way out,
O lord white as jasmine.*

(Akka: 17)

Note the startling difference in the feeling tone of these passages, the coolness of the Upanishad and the woman-saint's heart-rending cry for release. The classical text describes the subject, the Cosmic creator; the *vachana* describes the subject, the speaker's feelings towards herself. The one describes creation by and out of the creator; the other describes the self-trammeled in its self-created illusions. One speaks of the birth of worlds, awesome, wondrous, non-human; the other speaks of a death, small, calling for compassion, all too human.

Though Basavanna says in the poem quoted earlier, 'I'll sing as I love', rejecting conventional patterns of verse-making, the *vachanas* evolve a distinctive structure (as, in the religious dimension, anti-structure develops a counterstructure). Their metre is not syllabic but syntactic; the regularities and returning units are not usually units of sound, but units of syntax and semantics. The oral origins of the poetry are clear in its favourite structure. The poetics of the *vachana* is an oral poetics.

The range of *vachana* expression spans a pan-Indian stock of figures, homely images of everyday experience, the sense and idiom of the earth, as well as an abstruse esoteric symbolism. The esoteric *vachanas* are called *bedagina vachana* (fancy poems), more riddle than poem and, oftentimes, with a whole occult glossary for key. This glossary is made up of a common pool of symbols and concepts drawn from yogic psychology and tantric philosophy. Allamaprabhu, the most metaphysical of the *vachanakaras*, has many *bedagina vacanas*, e.g.,

*They don't know the day
is the dark's face,
and dark the day's
A necklace of nine jewels
lies buried, intact, in the face of the night;
in the face of day a tree
with a leaves of nine designs.
When you feed the necklace*

*to the tree,
the Breath enjoys it
In the Lord of the Caves*

(No.218)

The paradoxical images of this poem have a surrealist brilliance in themselves. To a learned Virasaiva, the poem would mean the following: The night and day are obviously ignorance and awareness. It is in the experience of the ignorant that we find the jewel of wisdom, a necklace of nine lingas. In awareness is knowledge and discrimination (the tree), carefully nurtured. But only when the wisdom of the ignorant experience is fed to the discrimination of the aware, the Linga of the Breath finds true joy.

Such a dark, ambiguous language of ciphers (*sandhyabhasa* or 'intentional language') has been much discussed by scholars of Yoga and Tantra. Riddles and enigmas were used even in Vedic times. In the heterodox and esoteric cults, such systems of cryptography were intended to conceal the secret doctrine from the uninitiated and the outsider. But riddle and paradox are also meant to shatter the ordinary language of ordinary experiences, baffling the rational intelligence to look through the glass darkly till it begins to see. It is 'a process of destroying and reinventing language' till we find ourselves in 'a universe of analogies, homologies, and double meanings'.

A related device is a favourite with vachanas: extended metaphor, a simile which projects a whole symbolic situation suppressing one part of the comparison. One of the most moving uses of the extended analogue is Mahadeviyakka's love of God, where all the phases of love become metaphors for the phases of mystical union and alienation. For instance:

*I have Maya for mother-in-law;
the world for father-in-law;
three brothers-in-law like tigers;
and the husband's thoughts
are full of laughing women:
no god, this man.
And I cannot cross the sister-in-law.
But I will
Give this wench the slip
and go cuckold my husband with Hara, my lord.*

*My mind is my maid:
by her kindness, I join
my Lord,
my utterly beautiful Lord from the mountain-peaks
my lord as white as jasmine
and I will make Him
my good husband.*

(Akka, 328)

Mahadeviyakka's poem explicitly takes over conventions of Indian love-poetry (available in Sanskrit as in the regional languages). An *abhisarika*, a woman stealing out of a houseful of relatives to meet her lover, is the central image. The method is the method of allegory, explicitly equating, one-for-one, various members of a household with various abstractions: Maya or Primal Illusion is the mother-in-law. Some of the equations are implicit, and they draw on a common background of philosophical concepts. For instance, the three brothers-in-law are the three *gunas*, the three ultimate components which make all the particulars of nature what they are; these three are inescapable as long as one is part of nature, they keep a tiger-vigil. The husband is Karma, the past of the ego's many lives. The sister-in-law, who also keeps the speaker imprisoned, is apparently the *vasana*, the binding memory or 'smell' that the Karma-Past carries with it. The kind confidante or maid is the Mind, who alone helps her meet her Lord and keep the tryst.

A third important movement that created an alternative community is the *Warkari* movement of Maharashtra whose creative influence has been felt in a variety of forms by several social and political revolts in India from Shivaji's rebellion in the 17th Century to Gandhi's in the 20th. The movement was mostly led and sustained by underprivileged classes and survived trying times by its autonomous, unique and broad-based style of life, thought and expression. The thirteenth century Mahanubhav movement established by Chakradhar (1194 – 1276), though led by learned Brahmins, had also disregarded the Vedas, attacked Brahmanism, offered equal status to women and *soodras* and was supported by the marginalised sections of the society: but after Chakradhar was killed by the supporters of the Brahmin orthodoxy, they could not innovate their technique of organisation and expression. Their esoteric scripts, strange costume and monastic establishments alienated them from the people. *Warkaris* adopted a

more inclusive approach, welcomed people from all sections, had a simple dress code, discouraged *sanyasa* and *jnanamarga*, had no fixed establishments that could be destroyed by the Muslim rulers, had only small village temples and idols of the tolerant God *Vitthal* used as a symbol and a connecting emblem, left no documents but only preached and sang and gave opportunities to its members to meet one another during the holy pilgrimage to Pandharpur, sacred to *vitthal*. Their saints included Brahmin outcastes humiliated by the orthodoxy like Jnandev and his brothers, liberal Brahmins persecuted for their radical views like Ekanath and Bahinabai and *shoodras* like Namdev the tailor and Tukaram the pedlar who was persecuted and tried and had his verses (*abhangs*) thrown into the river by the Brahmin priests.

Namdev (1270 – 1350) seems to be the first revolutionary saint-poet about whose life some information is available. A closer look at his life is necessary, as he was certainly the first to strengthen the expressive techniques of the movement. Son of a *shudra* tailor, he was the most respected leader of his time because he organized a whole group of active men from all communities under the banner of the *Warkari* cult. A widely travelled man, he is believed to have received the new ideas of *bhakti* from the South, and there is evidence that he spread them in the North in the early fourteenth century. As the *bhakti* cult expounded by him was broad in structure, it spread rapidly in the North in the late fourteenth century, absorbing spontaneously various regional varieties of worship without any conflict. He was a close associate of the pioneers of the *bhakti* movement in the North. His ideas even obliterated the borders between Hinduism and Islam by pointing out the bigoted character of both these religions, in effect developing a strategy to criticise the two major enemies – Muslims and Brahmins. He became, therefore, the most popular literary-religious leader of the downtrodden of his times, cutting across both the rigid faiths. He says in one of his Hindi songs:

*The Hindu is blind and the Muslim is cross-eyed,
A saint is certainly better than both of them.
The Hindu worships his temple, the Muslim worships his mosque,
Namadev will worship neither the temple nor the mosque.*

In one of the Hindi *padas*, he says:

*Give up all worship,
all debates,
all activity.*

*Give up all distinctions,
Keep your mind on Govind.*

(Pada, 63)

Another pada says:

*These clowns
with their sacred beads
and rosaries
know nothing about truth.
They see nothing
but claim to give insight
to others.
Can deception lead to liberation!*

(Pada.64)

He ridiculed those who performed horse-sacrifices, gave gold in charity, offered rice-balls in Gaya, lived in sacred Banaras, chanted Vedas and carried out the six Brahmin duties (*yajna, yajana, adhyayana, adhyapana, dana and pratigraha*). In a curt statement he says:

*I gather no leaves
for rituals offerings.
There is no god
in the shrine*

(Pada.65)

His attitude to the body was similar to that of the Veerashaivas and yet different. 'The body is false', says Namdev. 'And yet it is real / If Ram is your lover' (*Pada.78*). He gave up idols when he understood the Truth: 'I had my faith in iron and copper. / I had chains around my feet. / But now I have no fear of this ocean of *samsar*.' (*Pada.68*)

With this broad foundation, Namdev spread his cult, which did not even have any particular name. His verses were incorporated in the Holy Granth *Sahib* by the later Sikh leaders. His method of challenging Muslim fanaticism and Brahman domineering was subtle and full of humility, disarming and apologetic; but at all stages of his activity he was very sure of his means and ends. Most effective in his quiet revolt, he was the first to accept the untouchable communities in his liberal sect. A contemporary poetess Janabai, a slave-girl, describes him as "the Head of a Joint family of saint-poets". She describes him in another

lyric as "a half-naked figure, dancing wildly on the sands of the Chandrabhaga at Pandharpur, singing his lyrics, preaching his radical principles to the crowd". This is the first reference in *Warkari* lore to the popularity of the revolutionary style of "preaching while singing" or *Kirtan*. Namdev himself says:

*We will dance in the Kirtan,
And light the lamps of knowledge in this world.*

Namdev advised the common folk, "we should express openly in order to forget our sorrow, temptation and suffering". This advice was taken by his family and his followers.

Those were the days when men suffered not only from foreign aggression, war, famine and ruin, but from inner problems which were probably more terrible. In such a society, the poor *Warkaris* gained confidence on the strength of their expression. Without political support or social status, the poor dumb communities of *shudras* suddenly learned that they had a voice. Now they could protest and question. For example, Janabai could say, "Nothing wrong to be a woman, the Saints taught me this". Again one of Namdev's fellow-*Warkaris* and followers, Chokha Mela (d.1338), an Untouchable, would bitterly address to Vitthal in his lyric:

*I am an Untouchable, how can I worship you?
They drive me out, how can I meet you?
At my slightest touch, they have to purify themselves,
My God Vitthal! I pray for your mercy.*

His wife, son and brother also speak of the inhuman conditions forced on the Untouchables. Despite starvation, humiliation and helplessness, their struggle to breathe in the free air of equality is characteristic of the liberating influence of *bhakti* on the outcastes. Chokha's son Karma Mela, a young man, describes the wretched condition of his community:

*We never have good food to eat,
We live disgracefully in this world,
God! You have a good time,
Only misery has come to our lot.*

Elsewhere he says, with more confidence:

*God! You have your limitations,
I'll have to find the way myself.*

And about three centuries later, Tukaram (1608-1650), whose daily *kirtans* at his small village Dehu gathered crowds from distant places, became the most vocal enemy of the Brahman orthodoxy. "To censure this world has come to my lot", was his full conviction, so he could fearlessly say:

*A Brahman who believes in contamination is not a Brahman,
Suicide is the only expiation for such a Brahman.*

Thus the *Warkari* tradition developed in the natural course certain effective means of self-expression and mass education which were initiated by Namdev. By any measure, Namdev's revolt was stupendous. He could dissolve the infernal divisions of humanity within Hindu society by the winning strategies of expression.

Apart from the natural functions of literature, such as entertainment and the preservation and dissemination of knowledge within society, the *Warkari* literature is also found to be acting as an agent of social change. Thus, the creative use of language as action became a stylistic device with which the saint-poets influenced the larger plane of society. The predominance of oral expression in the *Warkari* movement has other socio-linguistic dimensions as well, namely, that this verbal expression saved the *Warkari* leaders from depersonalization, as it was the only available means for the oppressed people to employ safely. The oral techniques of expression needed to be strengthened. For example, Tukaram glorifies the use of "words" thus:

*We possess the wealth of words,
With weapons of words we will fight,
Words are the breath of our life,
We will distribute this wealth of words among the people,
Tuka says, look! the meaning of Word is God,
With Word we will extol and worship.*

Creative experience made Tukaram feel even superior to the learned Brahmins:

*We alone know the real meaning of the Vedas,
Others only bear the burden of it.
Food eaten is not to be compared with food seen,...
Tuka says, we have found the root,
Of its own the fruit will be in our hands.*

Tukaram believed in the spontaneity of his poetry:

*I am no guru.
I rain like a cloud.
Listen O Saints,
The sound you hear
Is the falling of rain.
It's baby-talk.
It comes from God,
The beginning of speech.*

Tukaram had also a sense of black humour when it came to describing his painful experiences like his wife's quarrels with him, his growing debts and the death of his children and even his early failures to realise the Lord. He often quarrelled with his God, wept, complained and even abused him, thus proving his God to be all too human:

*Whenever I address you,
I find your back turned to me.
That is how I have learned
To understand your feeling for me.*

or, 'A king may not grant land to the landless./ But wouldn't he at least ensure / That his subjects get a meal? / After all, a king must protect / The myth of his benevolence' or

*My wife died:
May she rest in peace.
The Lord has removed
My attachment.
My children died.
So much the better.
The Lord has removed
The last illusion.
My mother died
In front of my eyes.
My worries are all over.*

But when it came to attacking hypocrisy, Tukaram was always sharp:

*In this Age of Evil poetry is an infidel's art:
The world teems with theatrical performers.
'They cite Vedic injunctions but*

Can't do themselves any good.'
'The brahmin who flies into a rage at the touch of a mahar
That's no brahmin.
The only absolution for such a brahmin
Is to die for his own sin.
He who refuses to touch a chandal
Has a polluted mind.
Says Tuka, a man is only as chaste
As his own belief.

Or see the way he laughs at the tantrics:

His teaching begins when the sun goes down.
Drawing mystic squares on the ground,
decorating them too, he worships occult designs.
Placing lamps in all for corners and behind curtains
He assumes a posture and demonstrates tantric gestures.
His preaching over, time to start the feast
Committing sacrilege is his means of livelihood:
He sends his followers into the bottomless pit.

Elsewhere he says 'Nobody becomes a saint by making poems, ... Being a saint's kin / A saint is not known by the manner of his dress ... by his family's name / A saint does not wait for the chance to become a saint / Nobody becomes a saint by carrying a begging bowl.... only by wearing rags.... by delivering songs and sermons.... by telling sacred myths.... by reciting the Vedas ... by performing rites... through penance or pilgrimage.. by living alone in forests... merely wearing beads... merely wearing ashes.' Later he says a saint is one 'who experiences Cosmic Being' and 'see all through as equal, covet nothing, violate nothing'. The sense of the sacredness of beings we found in Basava reappears in Tukaram:

Don't kill a snake
Before the eyes of a saint
For the saint's being
Includes all living things
And he's easily hurt.
A single hair plucked from one's body
Causes instant pain
And the soul that perceives
Life as a community always suffers.

In the *Warkari* literary tradition, both the written and the oral cultures, along with several intermediate forms like *purana*, *harikatha*, *parayana*, *pravachana* and *pothi* were popular at one and the same time. These forms of expression needed group co-operation of various communities from Brahmans to the Untouchables, and they reflect several aspects of literature as a social institution. On the whole, they are pointers to the social synthesis of the upper and the lower classes in the making, however slow it may have been. The *Warkari* cult has evolved several oral styles of expression over all these centuries, utilising the traditional as well as folk forms. There are the traditional forms like *purana*, *pravachana*, *parayana* and *patha*. The creative literary forms like *ovi*, *abhang*, *pada*, *bhupali*, *gana*, *gavalan*, *virani*, *shloka*, *Krishnaleela* and verse biography have been immensely popular. Numerous musical-dramatic forms like *gondhal*, *rupak*, *bhedik*, *lalit*, *kakad arati* and *shej arati*, *goph*, *garud* and *bharud* are performed on certain occasions. *Mantra*, *namasmaran* and *haripath* are for individual worship, while *katha*, *pothi*, *saptah*, *kala*, *palakhi*, *dindi*, *vari*, *bhajan* and *kirtan* demand large social gatherings. In all these forms, the villagers have a full role to play and their creative talents are expressed fully. However, the most characteristically institutional of the *Warkari* forms is *kirtan*.

The *Warkari* cult has evolved styles which are best suited to the resources of the underprivileged classes and, therefore, it never attempted to go beyond the moderate range of social change and preferred to work within the broad Hindu tradition. With these limitations, how far the cult could go towards satisfying the spiritual needs of society as a whole, is itself an independent subject of study.

The sant tradition of North India began to be defined as separate from the Vaishnava tradition only in the mid-nineteenth century. D. Barthwal's *The Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry* (1936) Parashuram Chaturvedi's *Uttari Bharat Ki Sant-Parampara* (1952) and the researches of Charlotte Vaudeville, Karina Schomer and W.H. McLeod firmly established this differentiation. The earliest Saints of the northern Indian *parampara* are said to have been disciples of Swami Ramanand, the Vaishnava reformer who lived in Banaras in the 14 – 15th Centuries, who is said to be a direct descendant of Ramanuja, the great teacher of the Southern Sri Vaishnavas, yet had certain disagreements with the sect and founded the more liberal Ramanandi sect. This gave rise to a more conservative school that worshipped the *Saguna* Ram and Sita represented by Tulsi Das who accepted the Varna system and Brahmin

superiority and a more radical Sant school who believed in *Nirguna bhakti* and rejected orthodox practices and caste differences, represented best by Kabir and included Sena, Pipa, Dhanna, Sadhana, Raidas, Guru Nanak and Dadu Dayal besides late medieval saints like Prannath, Dharanidas, Dariya Saheb, Jagjivandas who revived the Satnami panth and 18th – 19th Century leaders like Charandas, Paltu Sahib, Tulsi Sahib of Hathras, the exponent of the idea of *sant mat* and Shiv Dayal Singh, the founder of the modern Radhasoami movement. Kabir, Nanak and Dadu are the preeminent figures of the northern Sant tradition. Of them Kabir undoubtedly stands out as a rebel. Kabir's belief in the fundamental equality of man was based on his belief in the essential unity of God:

*Only the One I recognise
those who call Him two will go to hell
For they know not the reality.
All human beings are sustained by the same air and water,
illuminated by the same light
All have been formed out of the same dust
And their creator is the same.*

(Padavali, 55)

Guru Nanak echoes the same, 'Everyone obeys His orders and He is the originator of all. The form, content, and colour of everyone, and everything has been determined by Him' (*Nanak Vani*, 223). Dadu Dayal asserts that all human beings have the same essence or spirit derived from Brahma. Comparing Brahma to a flowing river, he says the water contained in different pots is the same. (*Dadu, Vani* 29/21) Yari Sahib in the 17th Century used the simile of gold, moeten and shaped, to convey the same message: Darya Sahib says, 'All human beings suffer from hunger or thirst, and feel pain or pleasure in the same way.' Kabir made caustic comments against rituals as when he asks, 'People are such fools that they go to worship stones. Why don't they worship the grinding stone which grinds for them the flour to eat?' (*Loga aise bavare....*) The significance of Word we found expounded by Tukaram finds intense expression in Kabir also:

*Find the word, know the word
You are nothing but the word
Word is sky, word is hell
Word is in the cell and in the cosmos*

*Word is man, word is woman
 Word is the trinity
 Word is the visible and invisible Omkar
 Word is the beginning of the creation
 Kabir says, you examine the word
 Word is the Creator, O, brother*
 (Shabda Ko Khoji le...)

Kabir is close to the Upanishads and the Sramana thinkers when he says that 'Soul is neither human nor divine', 'It is neither Hindu nor Sheikh', 'Nobody saw it being born, or dying'. Brahma is described as being 'beyond Vedas, beyond differences, beyond sin or virtue, beyond knowledge, beyond meditation, beyond the solid or void'. This led to the equality of religions:

*For Turks in Mosques and for Hindus in temples
 both Khuda and Ram are there;
 Where mosque and temple is not
 Who rules supreme there?*
 (Gangasagar, 63)

Again,

*What use fasting and kneeling
 What use Haj and going to Kaaba?
 The Brahmin keeps his twenty four ekadashi fasts
 And the Kazi keeps his Muharram.....
 To the East is Hari, to the West Allah's abode
 Search thy heart, within the inner core
 Ram and Rahman live there.*

He was at times a hard realist. 'The hungry cannot be devout/please take back this rosary.... I want a half seer of cereal/ to fill the belly twice a day/I want a cot to sleep in/ be my pillow a wooden frame...'. Kabir decried caste in the strongest terms. 'If thou a Brahmin, born of a Brahmin woman, why hast thou not come in another way?'; 'Whilst dwelling in the womb there is no clan or caste, from the seed of Brahma the whole creation is made'; 'Whose art thou, the Brahmin? Whose am I the Soodra, whose blood am I? Whose milk art thou? Kabir says, who reflects on 'Brahma', he by me is called a Brahmin'; 'There is impurity (pollution) in water, impurity in earth. There is impurity at the time of birth, there is impurity in the hour of death, there is impurity

in destruction'. He declared: 'The beads are of wood, the gods of stone, the Ganga and Yamuna are water. Rama and Krishna are dead. The four Vedas are fictions' and 'If by immersion in the water salvation can be found, the frogs bathe continually. As the frogs, so are these men, again and again they fall into the womb.' Kabir said, 'the sacrificial fires may or may not bring *mukti*, but the smoke that they raise certainly blinds vision'. Kabir denounced the show of wealth and every form of indulgence, recommended physical labour to everyone as did Basava and did not spare even royal greed and political aggrandisement.

Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, has traced Kabir's oppositional thinking to Ramanand, the *Hathayogis* and some *Sahajyani siddhas*. The foreign students of Kabir like Vaudeville, Linda Hess, W.G.Orr, Mc Leod and David Lorenzen have also pointed to Kabir's extraordinary independence of character. To quote Linda Hess, 'Kabir is famous for his solitariness, vigour, fearlessness and iconoclasm; for his swift and original mind, that pierces dark places with sudden probes of light and finds a natural idiom in paradox and obscure metaphor'. Barring Tuka, Kabir was perhaps the most personal of the Bhakti poets of the North, not only because he dwells on his private experience but he gets very personal with his audience. While Sur Tulasi and Mira address God, readers or listeners are only eavesdroppers. Kabir seems to be primarily addressing us. Kabir's passion to engage, to wake people up, is evident in his formula, '*Kahai Kabira suno bhai sadho*' or '*suno ho santo*' ('Kabir says, listen brother Sadhu!', or 'Listen O Saints'). Kabir created a persuasive rhetoric close to what A.K. Ramanujan in the context of the *vachanas* calls 'spontaneous rhetoric'. It is natural, preexisting the idea of rhetoric that has an element of artificiality and calculation about it. Kabir used all kinds of tones, of separation, despair, supplication, sarcasm, ecstasy. At times he became lonely and confessional as in this *Sorathi* poem of the Western tradition:

*King Ram, here's my condition:
I can't drop worldly ties.
A bird that flies to the sky
but holds to its hopes -so I
can't drop hope, won't break
the rope. How can I fly?
I try for joy, but find
Sorrow. I can't
express it.*

The image of the bird striving to fly yet being tied by the rope of hope – close to Tukaram's state in his early abhangs – not only expresses his spiritual state of incomplete realization but perhaps his material condition, the state of the *julaha*, the weaver caught in the evils of poverty, caste and class that defeat his ambitions and tie him to earth. In the *Sabd*s also this tone occurs when he addresses Hari the silent trickster, 'Oh childhood friend, when you left me, where did you go that morning? You're the only man. I'am your woman. Your footstep is heavier than stone' (*Sabda* 37); so too in the *bhairun*. How can I see you today? Without seeing you, how can I believe? Was I a bad servant? Were you unaware? Between the two of us Ram, who's to blame?' (*Bhairun*, 33) or in the *Sakhi*, 'Kabir says, how to work it out. I-he-you?' (*Sakhi*, 312) or the first *ramaini*: 'No one knows his ineffable movement. How could one tongue describe it?'

Kabir created a language of his own now often called *Sadhukkari* (Language of the Sadhus). In his *bani* he mixed Hindi, Urdu, Persian and many dialects of Bhojpuri, Punjabi, Purbi, Marwari etc. Non-adherence to standard forms, symbolism, technical allusiveness, words from several regional languages and use of language according to subject matter are some of the characteristics of his poetry. At times he used an obscure language as in *ult-bansiyan* often called *sandhabhasha* (according to Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya) or *Sandhya Bhasha*, the language of the meeting point or that of the evening, a riddle-like form probably used to hide certain esoteric practices or secret notions, as did the Tamil Siddhas or the Tantrics. This is found in paradoxes like 'without feet one runs in ten directions, without eyes see the world,' 'the rabbit devours the lion'; 'The mouse fought the elephant', 'the ant uprooted the mountain', 'the cow milks the calf' etc. where different nouns have symbolic connotations like *niranjan* becoming elephant, the soul, calf or mouse, the *maya*, the cow etc. He used various metres, like *doha*, *pad*, *sakhi*, *sabad*, *Ramaini*, (*chaupaiis*) besides tunes from folksongs. Kabir, as Firaq Gorakhpuri says, charged the language of the rural masses of Eastern U.P. with a new meaning and electrified their dialect. Linda Hess who has done an extensive study of Kabir's rhetoric points to his diction and structure that is bruising. It hurts and is designed to break something, as in 'Pandit, you've got it wrong', 'Pandit, do some research and let me know how to destroy transiency', 'Now you Mr.Qazi, what kind of work is that, going from house to house chopping heads? Who told you to swing the knife?', 'Pandit, tell me where untouchability came from?' 'Son of a slut! There, I've

insulted you. Think about getting on the good road', 'Qazi, what book are you lecturing on? Yak, yak, yak, day and night. You never had an original thought', 'Saints, here is a surprise for you. A son grabbed his mother while a crazy virgin fell for her father, dropped her husband but went to the in-laws. Think of that!' 'That *Shudra* touching your food, Pandit, how can you eat it?', 'Hindu, Muslim, where did they come from? Who started this road?' etc. Riddles, surprises, challenging questions, black humour and abuse abound in his poetry. We do not find his intensity in Nanak, Dadu or Gorakh who are careful not to hurt and wish to appear sober. As Linda Hess says, when Kabir conjures up a comic Pandit, we laugh; when he exposes the greedy and hypocritical, we scorn; when he reveals the incredible blindness of people who won't face death, we applaud. Listeners tend to identify with Kabir, he is so intimate and disturbs us with his dialectical presentations. His 'abrupt and jagged style is a technique to jolt and shock people into facing things to push them over the edge into an understanding that they fear and yet profoundly long for.' (Linda Hess). Kabir resists absorption into others' conventions. Hindu hegemony has claimed a place for the *julaha* of Kashi within the Brahmanical orthodoxy, but Kabir to this day remains untamable.

Kabir had in him elements drawn from Vaishnave Bhakti and the *hathayoga* of the Nath-Yogis as well as from Sufism. Several Sufi poets between the 12th and 19th Centuries like Shah Abdul Latif, Baba Farid, Moinuddeen Chishti, Nizamuddin Oulia, Mian Mir, Sarmad, Bulhe Shah, Usman, Mulla Daud, Sultan Bahu, Shah Husain, Shah Sharaf, Ali Hyder and Hashim Shah tried to integrate Islamic ideas with the *Vedantic* vision. Sufism was originally born in Arabia in the 9th century. The Arabs laid stress on asceticism and disciplining of the body while the later Sufis in Iran and India influenced as they were by diverse strains of thought like Greek philosophy, Platonic ideology, Christian faith, *Vedantic* thinking and Buddhist lore, believed in leading an emotionally rich life. They drank and danced and believed that physical love could subliminate itself into spiritual love. While they believed in God and the Prophet, they also had faith in the powers of the *murshid* or *guru* who could lead to Divine realisation. The cardinal principles of the Sufi cult can be summed up as (1) God exists in all and all exist in God (2) religion is only a way of life; it does not necessarily lead to Nirvana (3) all happenings take place only as and if ordained by God (4) the soul is distinct from the body and will merge in the Divine according to a person's deeds and (5) it is the Guru whose grace shows the way to

God. According to the Sufis there are four stages in one's journey to realization: (1) *Shariat*: leading a disciplined life as prescribed in Islam, (2) *Tariqat*: following the path delineated by the *nurshid* (3) *Haqiqat*: gaining enlightenment and (4) *Marfat*: getting merged into Divine Reality by realizing the truth.

The practitioners of the Sufi cult came to India following the Muslim conquerors to propagate Islam and established centres at Lahore, Pakpattan, Kasur, Multan and Uch in the Punjab. However, the most popular sects among them were attracted to Indian faiths and cults, particularly the *Vedanta*. Indian Sufism was closer to Iranian Sufism than the Arab one. Like the Iranian Sufis who sang the praises of Yusuf Zulaikha, Laila-Majnun and Shirin Farhad, the Punjabi Sufis idealised the romances of Heer-Ranjha, Sohni-Mahiwal and Sassi-Punnun and gave them a metaphysical meaning. Like the Bhakti poets they chose their symbols from everyday life and employed forms like *doha*, *athwara*, *siharfi*, *baramah*, *kafi*, *baint* and *deodh*. Their language is simple and conversational and they compare God to a sweet-heart from whom Man is temporarily separated. As means to reach God, the Indian Sufis emphasised *jap* (repeating the Name), *dhyan* (concentration) and *habs-i-dam* (meditation).

The earliest of Sufi works written in the local languages is possibly the *Chandayan* of Mulla Daud (14th Century). The Sufi *masnavi* writer deliberately emphasised those aspects of the Supreme Being which were acceptable and familiar to the large body of the people, both Hindus and Muslims. Thus God is considered immutable, indescribable, far yet near, imminent in everything and yet not part of it. Mulla Daud takes the example of the sea and the waves to express the Infinite-finite relationship. Shaikh Usman quotes with approval the Upanishadic dictum, *tat-tvam-asi* (Thou art everything). He says, '*Tatvamasi puni tatva son, jai narak sab chhuta* (If you grasp the truth of *tat-tvam-asi*, you will escape the clutches of hell). Mulla Daud and Usman did not use the word 'Allah' for God; the word 'Nur' and 'Nur Muhammadi' are used in the context of creation; otherwise it is *gosain*, *srijanhar*, *niranjana*, *onkar* etc. They do not approve of *Maya*, the subject-object differentiation disappears in them. Prophet Muhammad is presented as an *avatar* (incarnation), a *purush* with effulgent qualities, carrying the essence of all the created beings. The first four caliphs are described as Pandits, Quran is described as *ved-puran*. Stories of Rama, Sita and Hanuman are part of the Sufi legend; Malik Muhammed Jaisi uses the story in his *Padmavat* and other works. He even wrote a work

dealing with Krishna's dalliance with the *gopis* and the killing of Kamsa, called *Kanhavat*. Sheikh Usman has many references to Mahabharata, Mulla Daud refers to the Shiva legend as Usman does in his *Chitravati*. *Chitravati's* hero Sujan (The Wise) becomes a *jogi* and travels to the holy places of all religions from Mecca and Constantinople to Kashi, Mathura, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The path of love is affirmed as the best way to God in all Sufi works. They identified the concept of *marjia* (immortality) with the Buddhist *nirvana* and the Indian concept of *jeevanmukta*. In a concept close to *aham brahmasmihi* they speak of *fana* and *baga*, stages where the lover sees only the beloved and gets identified with that Supreme Being.

The more radical aspects of Sufism are found in the Punjabi Sufis like Shah Husain, Sultan Bahu and Bulleh Shah. Bulleh Shah, for example, lived at a time when Muslim fanaticism had grown extremely intolerant of other religious systems. Sheikh Ahmed of Sarhand had declared that the glory of Islam lay in ridiculing the non-Muslims. 'Those who give quarter to Kafirs disgrace Islam. The non-Muslims should be kept at a distance like dogs. Violence and inhuman behaviour towards them are like saying one's prayers....' (*Muktoobat-i-Imam Rabbani*). Sikhs, including Sikh Gurus like Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh and his sons were massacred, Hindus who did not submit to the fundamentalists were also persecuted, temples and gurdwaras were defiled and destroyed. Bulleh Shah was extremely pained by these events. He cried: 'The Mughals quaff the cup of poison / Those with hoarse blankets are up / The genteel watch it all in quiet / They have a humble pie to sup./ The tide of the times is in spate.' He criticised the decadence of religions:

*Lumpens live in Hindu temples
And sharks in the Sikh shrines.
Musclemen live in the Muslim mosques
And lovers live in their clime.*

Sick of the sophistications of warring academicians, he preferred the company of the illiterate:

*Enough of learning, my friend
For it there is no end.
An alphabet would do for me
No one knows when one's life would end!*

When he was denounced as a heretic, Bulleh Shah shouted back:
 'A lover of God?/ They'll make much fuss; / They'll call you a Kafir /
 You should say – yes, yes' He also attacked the Muslim priests and
 their practices:

*'The Mullas and Qazis show me the light
 Leading to the maze of superstition.....
 With religious and social taboos
 They have tied my feet tight*

*'Pour not on prayers, forget the fasts,
 Wipe off Kalma from the sight
 Bulleh has found his lover within.
 Others grope in the pitchdark night'
 'Says Bulleh, welcome the lover when he comes
 Notice him not when he goes.
 The Brahmin and the Sheikh
 Are affiliated with their own woes'.*

*'They go to Mecca to atone,
 I've many a Mecca in my home.'*

*Bulleh loves the Muslim
 And salutes the Hindu lord.
 He welcomes home all those
 Who remember the Almighty God.*

He even discarded the rituals prescribed by the *Shariat*: 'Burn the
 prayer mat, break the water-pot, / Quit the rosary and care not for the
 staff.'

The Sufis also used devices like the *barah-masa*, that describes
 the seasons and their effects on individuals, to describe stages towards
 attaining the Supreme. They also used the conventions of love-poetry,
 even erotic poetry, to describe the beloved from top to toe (*nakh-shikha*)
 and narrate the final union. Myths and legends were always used to
 convey the message.

Simon Digby has noted that the expression of religious ideas must
 depend largely on the linguistic tradition in which they are put forth.
 The literary legacy of the Sants has thematic parallels that suggest
 lexical equivalences to the language of the Sufis even though the former
 use Hindi or Sanskrit terms in their verse and the latter rely on a Perso-
 Arabic vocabulary. What sants describe as *aparampara* ('beyond the
 beyond') is described by Sufis as *Wara'l-wara* ('behind the behind').

Similarly Karma is *qadr* (fate), *prapatti* is *aslama* / *tawakkal* (surrender to God) *japa* is *dhikr* (invoking divine names) *viraha* is *dard*, *prem* is *ishq* and *agni* is *atish*. The love relationship and its expression through the devotee's pain and suffering are again common to saints and Sufis. They also have a common hagiographical tradition. The Bauls also drew from the Sufi tradition, believed in *nirguna brahma*, identified *ahad* (god) with *ahamad* (The Prophet), followed Al-Hallaj's dictum *an-al-haq* (close to *bhedabheda* and *aham brahmasmi*) practised *yoga* and *tantra* and found God in the body. Lalan Fakir says: 'The primal Mecca is in this human body, don't you see it, my mind? Why do you run now from land to alien land and die, gasping for breath?' Duddu, a disciple of Lalan also says, 'If one knows the self, he knows Him who fosters.... God is not distinct from God, he is on his shrine in the throne-room of the heart'.

The vision of the Bhakti poets transcended gender distinctions. Basavanna says, 'Look here, dear fellow: / I wear these men's clothes / only for you. / Sometimes I am man, / sometimes I am woman. / O Lord of the meeting rivers, I'll make war for you / but I'll be your devotee's bride (Basava: 703). Dasimayya follows: 'If they see breasts and long hair coming / they call it woman, if beard and whiskers / they call it man: / but look, the self that hovers in between / is neither man / nor woman / O, Ramanatha!' (Dasimayya: 133). The women bhakti poets attract our special attention as they gave to the movement an altogether new dimension of sexuality that has been examined in different contexts by David Kinsley, Leela Mullati, Parita Mukta, Madhu Kishwar, Ruth Vanita, Vijaya Ramaswamy and others. The women saints reflect the tension between dharma — expected social duty : and bhakti — total dedication to God, in their protest against domestic roles and their desire to transcend gender. Many of them had to leave their husbands unable to serve two masters, some chose not to marry at all. God here becomes an alternative lover, and devotion is almost an alternative marriage, a better and more liberating alternative. This tendency can be seen even in the songs of the Buddhist nuns of the 6th Century B.C. (called *therigatha*) like Mutta, Ubbiri, Sumangalamata and Mettika. The focus of each lyric in the *therigatha*, as Susie Taru points out, is 'an epiphanic experience in which the painful constructions of secular life fall away and the torment of feelings subsides as the peace and freedom of nirvana are attained. As they exult in their new life transformed by Buddhism, they also contrast it to the painful worlds they leave behind.'

E.g. Mutta, who out of poverty, had to marry a hunchback Brahmin sings after leaving him:

*So free am I, so gloriously free,
Free from three petty things –
From mortar, from pestle and from my twisted lord,
Freed from rebirth and death I am
And all that has held me down
Is hurled away.*

Sumangalamata, a worker-woman, also exclaims, 'How free I am, / How wonderfully free, from kitchen drudgery./Free from the harsh grip of hunger / And from empty cooking pots / Free too of that unscrupulous man, / The weaver of sunshades'. Even while leaning on a staff in the old age Mettika is happy as on the hilltop the breath of liberty flows over her spirit. The women bhakti poets like Andal, Thirumangai Azhwar and Karaikkal Ammayar, Akka Mahadevi, Lakkamma, Satyaakka, Goggavve, Muktayakka, Nimmavve, Kalaveya, Remmavve, Kamamma, Kalavve, Kethaledevi, Somamma, Puttavve, Sarla Sankavve, Rekhamma, Veeramma, Akka Nagamma, Gangamma, Meerabai, Gangasati, Janabai, Bahinabai, Lal Ded and others we see similar expressions of freedom and outbursts of joy. At times the bhakta quarrels with the Lord in love as in these lines of Andal:

*I have lost the beauty of my pearly smile,
Of my red mouth and breasts
Because of the cruelty of the stealer of Hearts
Whom the gods hail everywhere*

And tells the cuckoo, 'What secret passed between us two / Is known to us alone - / If you will quickly coo him here / you will see what I can do'.

God becomes a way of resolving an otherwise impossible situation in these women saints. Their worldly marriages — actual or potential — represent both the lure and the bondage of the world, while their relationship to God represents a renunciation of the world and traditional roles. Some of them, like Akka Mahadevi of Karnataka and Lal Ded (Lalleswari, Lalla Arifa) of Kashmir even walked naked in order to show they are above gender. Akka Mahadevi who left her royal husband after an unhappy marriage thrust upon her to join Basava's alternative community of Veerashaivas expresses the tension of having to serve the earthly master and the divine lover simultaneously:

*Husband inside,
lover outside,
I can't manage them both.
This world
and that other,
cannot marriage them both
O lord white as jasmine
I cannot hold in one hand
both the round nut
and the long bow.*

In her poems Mahadeviyakka speaks in concrete terms of marrying and making love to Siva. Her poems indicate that she has sought for and achieved a spiritual marriage with her God. Whether these poems were written during her marriage to Kausika or after she left him is not clear, but in them we see how her love for Siva has provided Mahadeviyakka with an alternative to a difficult marriage. The following poems indicate the intensity and the immediacy of her love affair with God:

*He bartered my heart,
looted my flesh,
claimed as tribute
my pleasure,
took over
all of me.
I'm the woman of love
for my lord, white as jasmine.
Riding the blue sapphire mountains
wearing moonstone for slippers
blowing long horns
O Siva
when shall I
crush you on my pitcher breasts
O lord white as jasmine
when do I join you
stripped of body's shame
and heart's modesty?*

Metaphors of sexual union are naturally used by women for spiritual union. This becomes particularly bold and intense on occasions, e.g. here is Akka Mahadevi:

*In our embrace
the bones should rattle
In a welding, the welding mark
even should disappear.
The knife should enter totally
When the arrow enters, even
the feathers should not be seen*

Kadire Remavve, a married woman who left her husband and took to spinning for her livelihood and joined Veerashaivism uses vituperative language towards her husband:

*All husbands (men) are
destroyers of enemy forces
My husband crushes
the petals of my mind.
Other husbands are hunters of elephants
My husband is the hunter of my mind.*

(V: 192: 90)

Using very raw sexual imagery she says:

*All wives wash and give to their husbands
I do not give my husband, he does not need
All husbands have seeds
My husband has no seeds
All husbands are up above
My husband below, I'm above him!*

(193: 91)

Kadire Remmavve however accepts the Shiva Sharanes and describes her casual body as Prabhu Deva and subtle body as Chenna Basava.

Along with Akka Mahadevi, Ayadakki Lakkamma, a married saint, provides some explicit examples of the 'Sati-pati' relationship:

*When the seed is falling
on the face of the blossom
Can there be a back and front
to the blossoming face?
If you forget it and
if I realise it, can
there be different bodies?*

*When the root vanishes
the blossom remains.
For this union can there be
any other name but sati-pati?*

(V: 89: 44)

Satyaakka, an unmarried saint, visualizes Siva as her groom and tries to enlist the help of her (imaginary) relatives in drawing him towards her. She calls Siva 'Gandaru Ganda', 'the Man among men' and says Siva is the only man for her:

*Siva is within me
There's no space within
my heart for speech or thought
It is filled with Him.
I am in love with
the only man without blemishes
Despite me he has taken possession of me.*

(V: 148: 71)

In a couple of verses she reveals to her mother that she is being wasted away by the arrows of Manmatha (God of Love) and her youth is being wasted without Siva (V: 150: 73). In the next verse she requests her uncle (Bhava) to intercede with her bridegroom Siva on her behalf. She accuses Siva of being proud and headstrong because he has conquered many demons and ruined the Daksha Yajna by cutting off Daksha's head and replacing it with that of a sheep. The reference is to a myth concerning Siva's consort Sati and her father Daksha who had insulted his son-in-law and was duly punished. Satyaakka concludes:

*Having given myself to Him,
I cannot give myself to anyone else.
Bring that heartless Siva to me
I wish to embrace Shambu Jakkessvara.*

(V: 151: 73)

Akka Mahadevi declares (Vachana 93: 125) that other men are thorn under the smooth leaf, so that she cannot touch or go near them or speak to them confidences. So she can take only Chenna Mallikarjuna in her arms. She justifies her going naked, 'To the shameless girl wearing Mallikarjuna's light, You fool, where is the need for cover and jewel?' She wanted to overcome her sexuality by rejecting the body.

'Fie on this body / Why do you damn yourself / In love of it – this pot of excrement / The vessel of urine, the frame of bones / This stench of purulence!' (Vachana: 33). Goggavve asserts that knowledge has no gender and Dasimayya, a male saint, rejects gender and caste in one breath:

*Did the breath of the mistress
have breasts and long hair?
Or did the master's breath
wear the sacred thread?
Did the outcaste, last in line,
hold with his outgoing breath
the sticks of his tribe?*

(Vachana 96: 105)

Lallesvari lived sometime during the fourteenth century A.D. and is one of the most popular poet-saints of Kashmir. She was a devotee of Siva and spent the latter part of her life seeking union with him whom she identified as her inmost essence. Like Mahadeviyakka, Lallesvari's life illustrates the tension between dharma, the acceptance of one's customary social roles, and devotion to God.

Lallesvari was born in a village near Srinagar to an educated family and was married at the age of fourteen. Her domestic life after marriage apparently was extremely difficult. Many legends tell of the harsh treatment she received from her mother-in-law and husband, and extol her patience and forbearance. According to legend, her mother-in-law persecuted her unmercifully, while her husband was indifferent to her and refused to comfort her in her sufferings. Some of Lallesvari's songs seem to refer to these domestic difficulties:

*One has to bear lightning flashes and thunderbolts.
One has to put up with pitch darkness at mid-day:
Forbearance is tantamount to getting ground to powder between
the mill stones,
(If one can stand all this), contentment and peace attend on you.'*
*'He hurled a thousand abuses at me,
But I did not take it to heart.
If I am a true devotee of Sankar,
How can the mirror of my mind get defiled with ashes and dust?'*
*'Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches!
I went door to door, in my robes of sorrow,*

*Nothing did I receive but stones;
I did not find any one supporting me.*

At a certain point, about twelve years after her marriage, Lallesvari suddenly left home and became a wandering religious singer. Precisely what incident prompted her to leave home is not clear. Her difficult domestic life, however, must be understood as the background against which she rebelled when she set off naked to sing songs of her beloved Siva.

Lalleswari seldom uses analogies of sexual love for her devotion, yet has suggestions of an alternative relationship, or an alternative reality in her *Vakhs*:

*Passionate, with longing in my eyes,
Searching wide, and seeking nights and days,
Lo! I beheld the Truthful One, the Wise,
Here in mine own house to fill my gaze.
Waking when the moon was about to set,
I made my mad-heart sing,*

*How I bore the pangs of my Lord's love!
Crying 'Lali!' 'Lali!' (I am a seeker! I am a seeker!)
I awoke the Ruby in my Self,
Meditating on Him, my body was sanctified.*

Like Mahadeviyakka, she contrasts the ideals of her spiritual life with those of life in the world. Ultimately, service to her husband and in-laws is incompatible with her quest for union with Siva. In the following poem, she contrasts her nudity with customs concerning clothing which has no inherent sanctity. From the perspective of divine insight, life in the world ruled by custom simply is not redemptive.

*Dance then, Lalla, clothed but by the air:
Sing then, Lalla, clad but in the sky.
Air and sky - what garment is more fair?
"Cloth", saith Custom – Doth that sanctify?*

Mirabai, the sixteenth century Rajastani princess had to marry the prince Boraj as part of a political alliance. She had opposed the marriage and circumambulated Krishna's image instead of her bridegroom during the wedding. However, her husband died soon probably in 1521 and father in 1527, both in battle. Her mother had died while she was still a child. She was thus left to the mercy of her in-laws,

particularly a 'Rana' she refers to constantly in her verses. She was criticized for not having committed *suttee* and was abused by her in-laws. The 'Rana' seems to have tried even to murder her.

*Rana has given me poison; I know.
 (I am) like gold (which) when it burns in fire, becomes pure.
 I threw away my reputaiton and family honor,
 as one lets water flow away.
 Put a curtain up in your house,
 I am a weak woman, and deranged.
 The arrow from his quiver has struck my heart,
 and I have fallen into madness.
 I have dedicated my body and soul to the saints:
 cling to their lotus feet.
 The Lord has saved Mira; he knows she is his servant.*

Throughout all this, however, Mirabai remained the steadfast devotee of her true husband, Krishna, and eventually left the royal precincts of her in-laws to become a wandering devotee. She traveled to holy places in North India, particularly those sacred to Krishna, and died in 1546 in Dwaraka, where according to legend, she merged with an image of Krishna in a temple.

Mirabai's inability to reconcile her love for Krishna with love for her husband and accommodation to the ways of the world is the theme of many of her poems. In the following poem she rejects the world by refusing to adorn herself as expected, and precisely in not adorning herself she prepares herself to meet her true husband, Krishna. In renouncing the adornments of the worldly life, that is, she makes herself attractive to her god:

*I don't like your strange world, Rana,
 A world where there are no holy men,
 and all the people are trash.
 I have given up ornaments,
 given up braiding my hair.
 I have given up putting on kajal (collyrium),
 and putting my hair up,
 Mira's Lord is Girdhar Nagar;
 I have found a perfect bridegroom.*

In the next poem she refuses to give in to the pressures from her in-laws and asserts that her only love is for Krishna:

*Friend, I cannot live without Hari.
 My mother-in-law insults me,
 her daughter humiliates me,
 when Rana seethes in rage
 I am imprisoned,
 kept under house arrest.
 How shall I surrender our primal love?
 Love that was born in an earlier life.
 Mira's lord is Girdhar Nagar.
 No one else
 can ever reach her heart.*

As with Mahadeviyakka and Lalleswari, and as exemplary of medieval devotion, Mirabai did not seek to accommodate her devotion to her Lord with social duty. Her passion for Krishna was so all-consuming that she found it impossible to love a human husband in addition to her God, and she steadfastly resisted attempts to turn her away from her devotional pursuits. The quality of her devotion as an overwhelming emotion of love is clear in this poem:

*Do not go away,
 Do not go away, my lord.
 I as your slave, beseech you.
 Love and devotion share a unique route:
 lead me there, my lord.
 With incense and sandalwood
 I shall build my pyre
 Let your hands
 Set it afire.
 When I am finally consumed,
 smear your body with my ashes,
 merge my flame with your fire.*

In the *Bhagavadgita*, *bhakti* serves to undergird social duty by legitimating caste roles and occupations. By performing one's allotted social task, the logic of the Gita goes, one upholds the world; by performing all one's actions as sacrifices to the Lord Vishnu, one makes of one's social life a religious ritual. For Mirabai, devotion had nothing to do with performing her social duty or sanctifying her wifely roles. Devotion was a passionate love for God which made normal life in the world impossible. For Mirabai, *bhakti* did not rationalize her existence

by providing a context in which her everyday life might be understood as a religious ritual. Rather, it drove her mad in the eyes of the world, incapacitated her, as it were, from leading a normal, socially acceptable life:

Mira danced with ankle-bells on her feet.

People said Mira was mad; my mother-in-law said I ruined the family reputation.

Rana sent me a cup of poison and Mira drank it laughing.

I dedicated my body and soul at the feet of Hari.

I am thirsty for the nectar of the sight of him.

Mira's lord is Giridhar Nagar; I will come for refuge to him.

Janabai, the Marathi Warkari poet tells herself, 'Let me not be sad because I am born a woman / In this world; many saints suffer in this way'. She throws away her decorum and finds in Vithoba a friend and supporter. These women poets thus created an alternative family, resisted the oppressive social role imposed upon them by the patriarchal society and simultaneously created a parallel language of experience and emotion.

What made the Bhakti movement revolutionary was that it created a universal, non-hierarchical religion, a human, simple life-style, and egalitarian counter-communities along with a subaltern poetry and poetics of spiritual dissent. The Bhakti poets belong not merely to our past; they are our present as their agony and revolt continue to inspire the poetic movement of our own time.

The Wise Localities

Ranjit Singh Rangila

The question to be probed in this piece of writing is simple: Why do human beings do and say things that they do? To relate the inquiry to the contemporary academic research a secondary question is also posed: How much one may hold on to the available academic wisdom while pursuing this question?

It goes without saying that just as any other theoretical enterprise, this one is also hoped to operate at a subtle level of abstraction. There is, however, a difference to be made: although the question posed above is explored in relation to a general inquiry into life-society-culture-making practices of human beings, yet there is a personal commitment that I desire the writing may fulfill for me.

That is, the piece is written in honour of a person whom I met for the first time by mistake on the 1st floor of the Panjabi Bhavan, Panjabi University, Patiala way back in the summer of 1971. (I was to realize very soon that it was a mistake that I would cherish forever.) The span of thirty years, I know, is enough for a person to develop a working relationship. But in my case it has been just a wonderful continuation of a discovery, a deep relationship which was more than a learning opportunity with a person of a rare caliber, viz. that of Jawaharlal Handoo. I remember Handoo looked gorgeous, wearing a green shirt with buckles on the shoulders and a lot of air around, and as I see it now he has not only maintained the self, the look, but the air has also grown into a philosopher's gaze. The joy of engaging in this writing is, therefore, more than that of just being creative.

The writing follows a strategy. A discursive practice moves through some of the known issues in linguistics in particular to begin with. These issues are open to a general problematic of code and culture creation. The idea of *the wise localities* gets conceptualized through the discursive argumentation. The writing thus formulated progresses and gets worked out as a project within the system of ideas that I have been terming as C-semiology in some of my recent work.

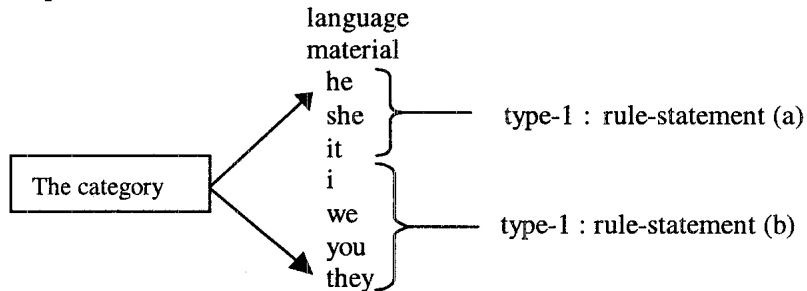
The Pronouns that were

Pronouns that have been identified as one of the grammatical categories in linguistic theory may serve as the most innocent point to open this writing. A set of commonly experienced sentences has them all:

- | | | |
|-----|----------|---------------------------------|
| I. | he goes | 1.pro.+ verb+ es (sg. pres.) |
| | she goes | |
| | it goes | |
| II. | I go | 2.pro.+ verb+ 0 (sg./pl. pres.) |
| | we go | |
| | you go | |
| | they go | |

Set 1

The knowledge available in linguistics is resourceful enough to find that this set has a 7-way pronominal distinction, given the number-gender and time-tense distinctions. The pronominal units fall into two main types, especially when observed from the point of view of the formal distinctions that the verb shows. There is every possibility of a disagreement over the way the two rule-like statements are made, and yet it is certain that different theoretical attitudes should agree to the fact that it is possible to reach some version or the other of the formal rule-statements offered. These facts can be abstracted into the following map:



Map 1

To appreciate the knowledge created by linguistic inquiry, however, there are a few things that ought to be surfaced as they underlay the abstracted material. That is, one assumes that it is possible, in principle, to categorise any materials into a very limited set of a few categories. In other words, to put the issue at a more subtle level of abstraction, one may be willing to hold that human beings are endowed with categorical consciousness such that grasps the vast spread of the universe by working them into certain sets of categories.

Within the realm of linguistic inquiry there are many issues that are more of a residual status from the point of view of this writing. For

instance, to appreciate the categories that linguistic theory has offered in general one may be willing to believe that those are the categories that are relevant and real to the facts of language.

As an issue this is open to good deal of debate since it is possible to hold on to any of the two equally likely possibilities. Nonetheless, the fact remains that in the history of human effort so as to make sense of facts of its universe, and language being just one among the rest, a lot much intellectual labour of love has been put in. One should pause to ask a simple question: Even if the categories, the generalizations that are offered are open to doubt, as to why should human beings have spent so much of their intellectual resources and physical time and labour in inquiring into the nature of language and for that matter of their universe? To localize the issue at the problem of pronoun it amounts to asking: What did human beings achieve by discovering or/and creating something like the category called *pronoun*?

But in that case there is nothing typical about asking such a question with reference to a given category and its efficacy. Is it not the case that one must ask as to why did human beings set to create a fairy tale, a loco-motive, a product or what have you? It is anybody's discovery that most of the contemporary academic wisdom like ever is engaged in inquiring into the facts of the universe within the perspectives of the disciplines that train people to *observe* the facts of their pursuance in certain ways.

I propose to claim that such an intellectual attitude leads to gaining such discoveries that are fact directed and fact specific in their reach. There is no wonder that more than often search for a proof, validation, efficacy, or all of them put into one pack, either leads to utilitarian consumerism, or to counting specificities translated into a language that reads like generalizations. The universe as a vast spread that is more than some array of facts observed by some known disciplines, and the one that is principled into a unified one gets rarely subjected to observation. The question posed in the beginning of this writing is addressed to such a possibility.

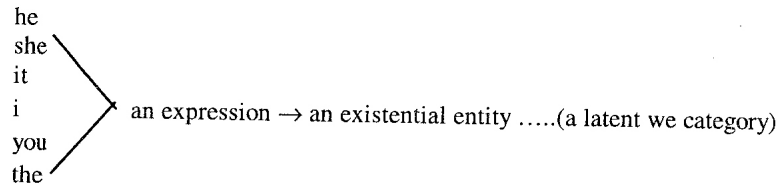
The Play of the Creative

The example of pronoun may be probed further. This time it may not be explored only as a pronoun. That, of course, is hardly ever articulated in linguistic inquiry.

For this probe to come about the primary condition is that the attitude of theory building and that of observation making may go in for

a conceptual shift. That is, instead of receiving each of the ‘he, she, it, I, we, you, they’ as a member of the category called *pronoun*, let each of them stand as an expression of a language to begin with. Further, let these expressions be observed not only as they have their grammatical role, status and place in the respective sentences, but also as what they do in the sentences and thereby enable them to say something.

The shift that this probe may exercise can be abstracted in the following rephrasing of the previous map:



Map 2

There is caution. This map offers something very preliminary about the shift. Some of the further details keep coming as the writing proceeds, and a lot many will be developed in future elaborations.

As such the shift pushes these so-called pronouns beyond their linguistic limits. Each of the expressions, in spite of its grammatical status that linguistic inquiry would want to centralize on, comes live to its field(s) of reference (see Rangila 1995 for details). To get realized as a field of reference for an expression, not just for a pronoun and the like, is to come into a relationship with an existential universe at some point or the other, call it an existential situation if it makes better sense (see Rangila 1998 and 2001 for some of the base material that lays the ground for such a proposal).

This relationship with the existential universe is necessitated by the fact that it is this universe that provides field(s) of reference to every expression of language. To come live for an expression, therefore, means to gain the relationship. The issue grows further later.

The point at which an expression establishes its relationship in the existential universe, the nature and the span of the relationship notwithstanding, is to be designated as the *point of investment* and also as the *point of enrichment*. Incidentally, these two qualifications of the point do not read as a contradiction or a paradox, rather there are many more qualifications of this point that may surface in the future elaborations of the idea. It suffices to note here that this point is that

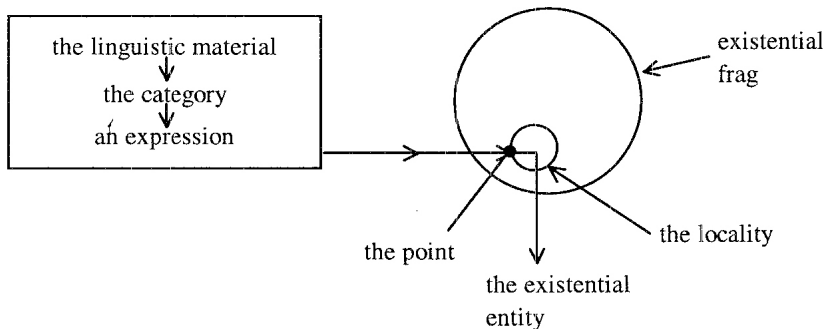
multi-modal ground where language material and life-making forces and processes meet.

And, this point is to be also seen as a point of investment, because immediately after its emergence on the universe a lot much creative activity starts happening. In a due course the activity matures enough to give rise to creations of various kinds and types. In this sense the point receives investment of a subtle nature.

Further, each time a creative happening takes place at this point, it just enriches the existential universe at that point. With the sustained and/or sequential creative activity this point develops into a *locale* of some significance to begin with.

This sustained creative activity may be seen as a *process of settlement* for both the points — the stage of initiation, and the locale — that is the stage of continuation. Out of the play of the settlement grows a *locality* at the point where creative activity happened to start with in the existential universe.

Although it is not very clear to me at this stage of thinking as to where on the line should it happen, yet it is pretty certain that the point-locale-locality, or any one of the three, start receiving *creative leaps* and conduct goods-value based *societal exchanges*. The play that is discovered in these statements may be abstracted in the following map:



Map 3

That is, with such a shift an opportunity surfaces for every expression, be it a pronoun, as indicated earlier, together with its grammatical baggage, to come in direct contact with life-making forces and processes. This link enables an expression to gain a status that of an existential entity to begin with.

This linkage, the direct contact, is a very crucial for an expression, because this is a threshold that the expression must cross in case it has to come live in an existential universe. Moreover, for an expression to get reached as an existential entity is just not a formal affair, i.e. a run of some kind that is oriented towards getting finished just by creating existential entity. The motivation for the making of an entity of this kind, with its back link with the expression, lies elsewhere.

If it were just an issue concerning a linguistic unit, an expression, or a category, then linguistic theory is right both in taking it as a linguistic fact, and in looking after it through a conceptualization of some kind that is geared towards a whole process of grammaticalisation (see Rangila 1994, 1995). But an entity in an existential universe can just not be there for the comfort of its being. In fact, any entity that hopes to be in an existential universe purely on the strength of its being only stands exposed to an easy effacement.

Actually, an entity within the framework of C-semiology has many sides of its being. Two of them make for the opening of the issue in the discussion so far: (1) that an entity has its lingual side — coming through the relationship with an expression that has its grammatical baggage, and (2) an entity exists to play a *role* within the praxis that a universe offers at a given point of time and at a given point of investment. To play the role of an actual c-semiological material, an existential entity has to get fully enriched.

This happens with the surfacing of more sides of its being. Such sides may come to the fore in the subsequent sections. It will also be evident at that stage as to why together with the insights coming from linguistic inquiry a lot more and much deeper and subtle insights are required to answer the question that this writing poses.

To continue with the expression-entity-universe problematic at this stage, it is important to note that at a given point in an existential universe, an expression emerges as a *role*, on the one hand, and on the other, the expression gets appropriately related to life. The reason for this appropriate relationship stems from the fact that one of the basic materials that life-making activity uses is the existentially real roles that may be owned and played by various kinds of agents, including human beings. It goes without saying that linguistic theory has subject-object as some kind of a version of these roles, though the difference is too subtle and critical.

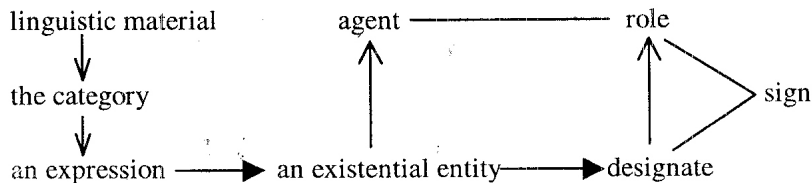
There is, however, another side of this play also. That is, not that it is always the case that the existential entities have to necessarily appear as some performable, or at least some conceivable roles only. These entities also get realized as referable materials that have their own data packs. I prefer to call these entities as designates. But that the both role and designate are two types of a mega unit called *sign* may be just noted in passing because the issue cannot even be partially developed within the scope of this writing.

Further, the distinction is rooted in the fact that it is quite reasonable to expect that a lot much of the entities of the universe have a very weak side of their identities. Therefore, they may not be capable of realizing as some role. It seems necessary for an existential entity to have negotiative power in order to be a role. Going by this requirement the weak cases of the entities may have to be accepted as mere designates. In any case a designate, like a role, has its relationship back in an expression.

Seen from the end of the play of creative processes of any kind the roles are the ones that are agents to begin with, but they have a capacity of ownership, since they become owners of their actions and of the consequences thereof. But designates are those that are in all circumstances acted upon, with a necessary condition that designates do not have their power to receive.

In this sense roles and designates are not some near equivalents, or translates of the notions like subject and object as in linguistic theory, because there what is object in one occurrence may be a subject in the other. In all those cases of social change, growth, development, revolution and the like where people succeed in transforming their identities, one may discover a possibility where a mere designated personality comes up as an enriched role.

The shift characterized in these details may be abstracted in the following map:



Map 4

The play of the creative, that is, the creative process or a set of them to happen and to create life, forms of life, products and a whole gamut of the objects in an existential universe, this is the platform to make the run. There is undoubtedly no claim to the effect that all these things can possibly be done with the conceptualization of the shift in its present form. Whenever a proper formulation gets created these are the minimum tasks that must be accomplished if human creative activity is to be made any sense of.

Operationally, to get the shift going any of the sentences in the opening set may be taken up. In the sentence 'he goes', for instance, the issue to be centralized is the existential status of 'he'. Once this happens, the expression gains an identity of an actor who is existentially real. Then, the action referred to and described by the expression 'goes' gets its actor also identified. That is, in an existential universe, an existentially real entity has the primacy over anything that may be metaphorically real to perform an action, especially if one is in the sphere of language and real life routines. This, of course, gets reversed in the sphere of writing, myth, fairy tale etc., and in the texts that are hyper-creative, considered with reference to language creations as the starting point.

In other words, the expression 'goes' in the sentence is primarily an action that has an essential requirement of an actor to make it happen in the time frame a statement of which is made by the 'es' part of the expression.

But this reading of the sentence 'he goes' may be criticized, because it is more of a begged reading. That is, to read the 'he' as an actor such that takes the responsibility of the action 'goes' is to hang on a hope of being able to discover as to who possibly this 'he' might be (see Rangila 1989: 67-71 for a preliminary statement of the problem). The wisdom gained through linguistic inquiry does not promise to offer such information, because all that it has is linguistic material and that too without sufficient and relevant existential content. One wonders what meaningful claims to empirical reality one can entertain on the bases of the bare bodied words, categories and sentences that are real only in themselves.

In the absence of the discovery one is no way sure as to where from the needed information could be forthcoming. If this issue is pursued to its logical end, at least on the lines of the present argumentation, then the so-called pronouns that linguistic inquiry has been faithfully living with may turn out as *hanged nouns*, because they

are supposed to stand as *pros* for the nouns that may be anywhere as well as nowhere, not at least within the limits of the sentences where they occur as pronouns. That is, to be existentially real a pronoun does not have any power of its own. It has to discover a noun whose *pro* it is supposed to be.

Now, the question that one may ask is: Can noun as a category do the needful? The answer is plain no, because this category has to look for an entity whose name may extend sufficient of its comfort and thereby project it as a noun. To me the trick at abstraction that has been found pretty well taken and operationally productive also over the centuries does take us nowhere. Rather, it falls on its fateful face and begs for some existential support. This is hopefully some proof of the relevance of the shift being offered.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that as linguistic material the pronouns in those sentences within the set are real facts of language that are commonly faced and are not any creation of some theory internal requirement. As a matter of fact, any theoretical scheme that believes in categorization is obliged to discover some category for them because as material they are not only real, but they behave more like nouns also.

It may be realized that in spite of the differences in the comparative merits like accountability, conceptual range, explanatory power and so on, yet every linguistic theory worth some name can take recourse to this noun-like behaviour of pronouns. What more after all a linguistic theory has to struggle for when language provides them 'empirical ground' by allowing the kind of sentences listed in the set? After all no one is ever supposed to ask a linguistic inquiry: As to who is this 'he' in the sentence 'he goes'?

However, one can never ask such a question not because one may not wish to ask. On the contrary, such a question cannot be asked because linguistic theory, most often, is made to workout its problematic in robust terms that it does not leave any possibility for such a question to be ever asked.

But asking such a question to these linguistic materials is a very natural condition within the conceptual shift that this writing brings forth. Given the limited formulation of the shift, the question already puts forth one of the requirements for the system of observation in the present case. That is, it must be known as to what status a given expression does possibly have in an existential universe, because only that can grant it any role in life-society-culture-making practices.

Even if it is the issue of determination of the categorical status of an expression, as is shown, a demand for knowledge-information regarding the existential base is the key requirement (see Rangila 1998 for some of the possible objections to such a position, especially the entities that cannot ensure their thingness). This issue requires further conceptual depth that can be gained through future elaborations.

To appreciate the way the facts are explored in linguistic inquiry one can hope to gain some information, demanded above, about 'he, she, I, we, you, they', because in spite of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' distinction, they belong to a class called animate. To this one may add an assumption that is otherwise lying implicitly there, that all animates are agentives. This may lead an analysis to take them as existentially real and, therefore, capable of existential roles. But the same information cannot be culled from the same sentential material about 'it'. In what follows I try to workout an alternative to discover the existential status of these language materials in general.

One may point out in passing that the so-called issues of efficacy and validation of a category and the like that have been discussed in the previous section need to be investigated on the ground of this shift. But, what could be the consequences of such a shift for linguistic inquiry in general is not my concern here. That such a shift in observation lies at the center of my idea of C-semiology is undoubtedly clear to me. I hope at this stage of the writing that this fact will be quite evident to the reader as the writing matures.

The Code Surfaces

Once the question "who is this 'he' in the sentence 'he goes'?" is admitted to the inquiry, the admission is sourced through a realization that over and above being an expression, a category and so on 'he' is accepted as an existential fact.

But this might be a vacuous hope. If the existential status of the 'he' is inquired into within the confines of the same sentence that is available to linguistic inquiry, then there is simply no ground for the information to surface since that has already been lost during the process of abstraction. On the similar grounds the expressed acceptance of fact also falls. The basic problem lies in the formulation where the so-called pronoun is helplessly bound with the sentences-pooled information field and that has no way to take it anywhere. And, as indicated above, the 'he' is not left with the required amount of existential content to land on an existential entity.

The perspective that this writing proposes to hold may show that there is no problem with 'he' as a language material. There is equally no problem with its status as an expression. And, hopefully, there may not be any problem with the existential status of 'he' as well. In fact, I propose to show that it is really the case. The problem stems from the way linguistic inquiry conducts its abstractional apparatus.

A person present at a locale-locality may be referred to as a name in a direct reference act, and can be possibly as a 'he'/'she', that is as a pronoun, in an instance of an indirect act of reference. Linguistically one is quite right if one claims that the person as a name, and the person as a pronoun are two separate observations. But this is not the complete story: whether it is the case of a name-noun, or that of a pronoun, the person in question is the same.

This is just not an existentially relevant fact, the same information is needed in order to justify the category pronoun, on the one hand, and to make sense out of the carry-arrangement that language works out in those instances of code construction where alternatives to noun are explored. In fact, if one leaves the observation at the level of language that linguistic theory has, then one does not only loose the very rationale of there being an observation, one looses the logic of cross category linkage also.

Existential universe does not have to bother as to whether a person is present or absent at a given point of time, given a locale. Both presence and absence are consequential upon a primordial being, that is, the central to anything for becoming an existential fact is its being. This should suggest that to begin with there has to be a person, and once this is ensured only then it makes any sense to talk about presence or absence of the given person.

The consequences of this discovery for the issue of reference are the following: whether it is in the case of direct reference (eg. presence), or it is in the case of indirect reference (eg. absence), the reference is necessarily to one and the same person. But, one must not ignore a linguistic catch here.

To deal with the existential fact language provides its facility by working out its arrangements in some typical ways. That is, the existential facts demand, as is clear in the immediate paragraph above, that in both the cases the reference is to one single person. Language accepts this from the existential situation but turns it into its facility by typicalising the information pack.

To carve out an expressive facility language follows a strategy. That is, a *convention* is brought in to handle the two cases of reference. In the case of the reference to presence of the observed person at the given locale the person is accepted as it is, in the second case where the reference is to the absence of the person the language comes out with an alternative of its own. This is the place where the existentially real expression 'person' is given its substitute such that is backed with a convention by the language, and hence a 'he' for a 'person'.

To word it in more familiar phraseology, it seems quite *arbitrary* for language to take recourse to convention building while dealing with existential facts. To this effect Saussure (1959) has a contribution to make. But this convention does not offer any possibility for a license that should grant breaking off the 'person' and the 'he' into two not only independent statements, but also two unrelated facts.

As a matter of observational practice it is essentially this breakage that justifies the analytical practice followed in linguistic inquiry where the two cases of reference that are otherwise bound by an essential existential link are abstracted into two independent sentences, the statements as it were. If this had not been the case, there was no case for any of the sentences that we started with in the opening set to be there.

To me it makes a foundational fact, an existential fact for language indeed, that it creates its conventions while constructing its carry-arrangements to deal with what is available to it from the existential universe where life gets created and people live with language. To me it is a robust operation if the conventions are made to parade while talking about language, but are left disregarded while building theories and the methodologies that thrive on such theories. To me this is the omnibus route that has been followed to rationalize the convenience, or ignorance, whatever the case may be, that promoted linguistic science as a sentence toterring science.

An example may present it better. To discover the convention that has been offered above consider the following set:

There is a king in Patana. He is very chaloo kind of man.

There is a king of skies. The king has a long tail.

Once upon a time there was a king, who had a very faithful horse.

Set 2

The statements in the example can in no way claim to exhaust the genus of the language in question, and there is space limit to make my

discovery equally painstaking. Further, the issue as to whether all that comes in the language that creates these statements falls within what has been termed as existential fact, or not, is being left undiscussed.

There are three ways of referring to 'a king' in its secondary occurrence (read it as reference as well as presence): (1) a king ... He; (2) a king...The king; and (3) a king... who. These three ways of making a statement may be easily taken as three different conventions to make three different statements. But what is crucial from the standpoint of the present argument is that none of the secondary occurrence may survive while building *existential matter of fact descriptions* if they are just delinked from their primary referential bases. This is sourced through the fact that the person = a king is not the same in all the three statements, on the one hand, and none of the three linguistic arrangements can be generalised to get a pronoun abstracted out of 'He', an article abstracted out of 'The king' and a reletaviser abstracted out of 'who'.

What runs through these three arrangements is a single fact that they are rooted through one convention or the other. But out of the whole array of the discoveries that are to be made about these conventions, including their nature, structure, status, operation and their sustaining logic as well as logistics, nothing substantial is taken up in this writing.

Since these conventions provide regulators of various kinds they look after the enrichment of language at the core of them. This, however, does not imply to make a claim that the conventions overrule all that is available at the base level of an existential matter of fact.

Even though this may read as a working hypothesis at this stage of the developments in c-semiology, yet there seems to me a considerable sense in saying that when language gets at convention making it does enrich itself so that it gains further means to lingualise reality on the one hand, and it participates in life-society-culture making by offering the possibilities of getting created some of the hitherto unknown facts and means.

C-semiology in this sense is hoped to have a fraction of its operational apparatus that Chomsky thought should get him *infinite number of sentences*, but in the present case it is also supposed to know as to why should they be there in the first place and what ought to be done to them, as well as, what they possibly may do as and when they get realized in an existential universe. In this sense these so-called sentences are just not simple empirical statements, they are existentially

real and socially relevant cultural creations such that are civilized in the totality of their beings.

The history of the contemporary academics may have it that this position stands in direct opposition to the one that Roland Barthes (S/Z) had to offer, especially on the issue of the autonomy of writing-language. One has more than a simple case of evidence to hold that no autonomy may be entertained if language (and by the reversal effect writing as well, as is the starting point for Barthes) is desired to make *sense* at least. This can in no way happen if language is formulated as a formal fact that is capable of structuring itself at the most as in the case of linguistic inquiry that Chomsky has been leading for almost half a century.

The problem here is more deep and subtle. If one wants to read autonomy written in these conventions, then, as shown purely in indicative terms above, one must also not forget that the conventions are more of regulators that are themselves rooted through the referential spread of the existential facts. These conventions, to be accurate, together with the carry-arrangements for the entities that they regulate, the emergence of these entities in *verity* and much more that may be discovered about the entities, all of them together are source through the linkage with an existential universe. Practically most of that which these existential entities make language to carry, should lose its sustaining logic if the linkage with the existential universe is not put at the center of the inquiry.

Further, as the language materials of the examples in the set may indicate, language in this writing is not meant just as a structural affair where some so-called linguistic materials are to be structured so that they get grammaticalised within some kind of syntactic limits. But there is a caution. I am not denying a room for a formalised apparatus that looks after the realization of all that is said and created. The issue to be debated, on the contrary, is what is supposed to be regulated, and what should suit as the apparatus to the material being operated.

Within the rationale that suits C-semiology the choice is quite open yet clear. That is, there has to be a principled base that looks after the linkage that links *the expressive* and *the existential*. To this may be added some of the supportive regulators, the conventions as already indicated, that are locality sensitive. And then there is the layer of the apparatus that is specificity-directed and supports the micro most stereotypicalities including phonic, graphic and kinetic substances.

None of the operations in this apparatus has any reason to be *simplicity* driven. Had that been not the case, then 'he goes' is a simple sentence and there is no problem. But going by the parallel processing (see Rangila 2001b) that human mind carries out to put up an otherwise simple sentence, one must be careful to vouch for how much simple the simple itself ought to be.

To postulate simplicity as the creative force that drives creation of language materials and to hold that as the defining element of the knowledge of language is a very comforting yet an innocent opinion. Given the sensitivity to cultural value in linguistic capacity to create and negotiate ideational positions that human beings put up to live within their existential universe through language, there is no justification for the human beings as simple fellows even if such a persons were to serve somebody's very wisely thought of theoretical needs (compare with Chomsky 1986 and 2000).

And there is nothing semantic about the language materials either within the perspective being gained in c-semiology. The linkage discovered in the section above is most subtle and fundamental that lies at the center of the apparatus to be developed. Moreover, the materials to be linked include an expression that is *phonic-ideational*, on the one hand, and an existential entity that is *scenic-dimensional*, on the other. But the most crucial fact about these materials is that even though they look apparently separate, yet they are never existentially separate, especially for human beings to whom they make sense. One always performs as the carrier of the other.

The other most central qualification of these materials is that they never attain their full identities if under some definable conditions they are made to separate, or are accepted-abstracted as separate. The case of pronoun is an example enough. By the same token if the linkage between the expressive and the existential is on, then together they do not merely combine as *the phonic-ideational* with *the scenic-dimensional* to produce something which is the phonic-ideational + scenic-dimensional in nature.

On the contrary, something very subtle happens with the link being there. That is, the phonic-ideational material seems to maintain its separate identity as it were. Similarly, the scenic-dimensional exhibits an apparently separate identity. This apparency (see Rangila 1989: 67-71 for some details of the issue) manages to create an illusion as if they are separate.

To my understanding it is this apparent separateness that has given rise to abstracting facts the way we have them in the contemporary academics. Since such a separateness allows observations and generalizations, notwithstanding the cost one has to pay in terms of the illusions that the disciplines end up in making people suffer, the majority attitude is why not have them. Given the institutional support and the patronising rewards we have rarely been able to see the linkage through the illusions to which a facility like apparency is made to support.

Beyond the apparent separation the linkage is to surface. Once gained, the linkage lifts these otherwise separate materials into a *unity*. That is, as an expression (read the expressive) and an existential entity (read the existential) come together through the linkage together they undergo a very subtle redefinition of their individual identities: both of the otherwise separate identities rise above their individual limits and enshrine into a *field of conceptual unity*. There is a back-link effect too. This newly acquired and a vastly encompassing qualification does not leave their identities as it is even in their separateness.

The leap that C-semiology proposes to take from this is to put up a claim that even though one lives with the expressive and the existential as the two separately manifesting identities, yet this apparent separation is undesirable for the purpose of theory building and discipline management, because in no existential universe, whatever the locality condition may be, they can function independently.

Theoretically, even if the apparent separateness may offer a smart point of initiation, and hence very convincing point to take off, yet no theory may define its tools of existential certainty, descriptive logistics, explanatory logic, principles of economy and formedness, and above all its conceptual vision by taking into focus such a starting point only. Those theories and/or observational layouts that lead to rare insights in the nature of things of the universe they are, to my experience, multi-focus in their gaze and grasp.

To think of the expressive and of the existential as one being the carrier for the other is more of natural consequence of the discovery, than a theory created requirement of C-semiology. But the idea of carrier may not be taken too far from its local limits, because the so-called expressions and entities cannot function to participate in life-society-culture-making practices simply for the fact that they may serve as carriers. Instead, their ultimate test is as to whether they reach their conceptual status by rising up to the field of conceptual unity or not.

For C-semiology this level of unity is the level of *sign*. This is the level where language becomes a real living, creative and value-expressing institution; a society becomes a living universe where people not only live their physical bodies, they live their languages also; and where culture becomes a universe of message-object-value exchange, a subtle field of code negotiation, substance creation and faith keeping.

When this vision of the universe is translated back into the problematic of language the whole project of sound-sense relation gets illuminated into the project of enunciation of verity. The issue here is not to just respond to a traditional project of science making, it is even more important to be responsible to respect man who has worked hard for centuries to grow much subtle than any logic inspired generalizations would have him.

To differentiate vulgar from virtuous is a play that takes of at the ground where sound and sense have been hoped to have met in their mythical past, but that they could never go their separate way once human beings gained their consciousness remains to be problematised. The claim in particular is that we the human beings do live and make our lives not at the level of sound-sense combine, rather our dealings are conducted at the level of conceptual negotiation.

And the fun is that this happens every millisecond of all our lives. We know it because it is all humanly possible for us. We do it and we know it because we as beings have a naturally given power and vision to reach the realm of conceptual unity, stay there and conduct our lives. With sustained gazing power and habit to conceptualise certain things in certain ways we have the rare ability to engage ourselves in inquiries where conceptual churning and conceptual enunciation is at the core. This is in this sense that the whole project of sign-function to C-semiology is ultimately an inquiry into civilized human conduct. Both language-making and life-making go together in this project.

This probe hopefully builds some rationale that may be insightful enough to believe that within the perspective of C-semiology linguistic inquiry is in for an epistemological break such that does not have any justification for there being something called grammar as an intellectual pursuit, unless and until one wants to follow some pedagogical priorities. As the intellectual probity should demand, there cannot be a thing called a study of language, and therefore of linguistic structure. The study will have to be that of what Gill (1981, 1996) called *conceptual structures*.

It may be useful to note that the epistemological break that one is hoping to usher will have to work out an intellectual shift where one does not study a phenomenon for the sake of it, but as it enshrines into those conceptual unities that either engage in discovering the codes that make up the phenomenon; or one searches for the ways through which codes get created and keep landing up in creation of wisdom. Within this project of the human there is a nice small game-like thing that has a professional fancy for creating codes that serve to describe the ones already discovered. C-semiology takes the study of codes as its central focus without getting lead by the details of any given type of them. That all the codes are the individual instances of the total project of the civilized is the faith to be reached.

Out of the intellectual debris as it were code surfaces for C-semiology as its basic unit and project of observation.

The Culturisation

The preliminaries stated above should now create a needed scope for asking a basic set of questions: Why should the so-called the expressive and the existential be linked in the first place? Who links them? Where do they get linked? What happens when they are linked? Is there any possibility of there being no link also?

To take up these question in greater details is not a possibility in this writing. Therefore, what follows is more of a very sketchy and preliminary in nature. In fact my aim here is to chalk out an inquiry by creating some of the basic and by far the central questions and issues, and to leave them for detailed solutions to future elaborations.

The answer to the first question in the above set is lying in the details of the previous two sections. Therefore, keeping those details in view an immediate answer to this question may that both the expressive and the existential get linked because over a long period of culture-making human beings have posited and enriched this link that now not only seems to be more of a natural, but it functions also as an essential link. The establishment of this link has become now such an experiential necessity. It has grown into more than a precondition for there being articulation of any kind. That is, call it a statement in language, a mathematical equation, a fairy tale or what have you, this linkage is there as if in principle.

I am aware of the fact that these statements will have to wait for their full and appropriate justification till they are made to sustain both real world existential universe and its virtual possibility within an

existential universe. It is, nevertheless clear to me, may be as a hindsight, that they will survive the test in all the existentially conceivable realities.

Or, to put it in more direct language, nothing can ever be said, perceived, thought and realized (see Rangila 1989: 38-45 for the detailed framework of realization) unless the link is available to the culture that create a statement or the like, on the one hand, and on the other, it is acquired also by those who desire to participate in the culture as its sensible owners and carriers.

One may sound as check. Most of these statements are made in such a way as if C-semiology is concerned with language only. This is more of an orientation that this writing is allowed to gain. This balance will move to a full scope where this system of observation is hoped to centralize life-society-culture-making within a single problematic. It is equally true in the case of human centrality. The writing reaches somewhere that may be termed as anthropo-centrality.

Given the history and size of the problem, it seems to me a better strategy for a given writing to proceed with conceptualizations of this magnitude by drawing careful lines each time one ventures to create them.

Incidentally, the human centrality that this writing is specifically responds to, makes one suggest that the linkage under discussion is supposed to happen within the cognitive potential of human beings.

As the link gets established, discovered, or accepted as the real given, depending on the position that a certain human being may be able to identify with, it takes the issue to level of sign, and that in its turn opens human consciousness into an existential universe where every sign stands for a certain unity of a conceptual kind. This unity is the real data-field and field of reference (again see Rangila 1995 for the details). To put the sign-unities into the praxis that creates codes or reads them is very natural endowment given to human beings. Code creation and code reading are both the two mutually supporting sign-actions that humans keep playing with all their lives. In fact all that is ever done is sign-action to begin with and then anything else - as the given reductive practices may finally drive them to be.

Finally, there are two ways of seeing the surfacing of the link. The position that I hope to substantiate in the future elaborations of this problem does not rule out the possibility of there being no link as a natural given. This link is chiseled out of the existential entities as they come along to human beings from the society they are born into. On the

one hand, this link grow along with ones individuation, and on the other, it grows through culturisation. There is, of course, a necessary assumption here that the link develops out of a natural propensity human beings have to surfacing the link.

This has its consequences for a system of observation that may get created. That is, viewed in the above sense an instance of no link would be that of a *failed link*. This may happen due to some displacement in consciousness, or due to some conscious and intentional play, as for instance somebody might take a particular attitude to conduct *linguistic inquiry* in spite of there being sufficient evidence that supports the opposite.

Creation of codes is basically rooted in the problem of enrichment of localities in an existential universe. But this happens through very complex run of processing. There are minimum three channels that keep operating. That is, on the one side human beings take along the existential entities that an existential universe offers, on the other they discover, as well as, posit conceptual unities in them, and on the third they play their sign-actions for the roles they perform.

There is a very subtle secret here. To engage in sign-action is to walk into the side of code creation that opens towards life-making, whereas the taking of existing entities and placing them into discovered conceptual unities make for *culturisation*.

The Walk into Unknown

To shift the problematic of an intellectual inquiry from what has been known as a language centered linguistic inquiry is just not an intentional game that looks for alternatives. As has been barely indicated that the shift does help in discovering some of the hitherto unknown problems. For instance, the problem of insufficient insight that supports the known category called pronoun. The discovery basically cuts through the solutions that have been accepted for long.

Given this discovery, there is some reason to believe that if the proposed shift is followed to a considerable level of maturity, many more cases wanting solutions may surface and hence lead to new and deeper insights than the hitherto known.

The shift at a subtle level of analysis proposes to accept human life as a continuous discovery where one discovers, comes to know some thing, becomes wise and continues. The play is always open onto unknown. At a certain level of abstraction, this remains more of a personal experience for human beings that they are directed at

conceptual unities. That human beings keep reaching, grasping these unities and continue to look for the fresh ones in this sense is an experiential fact.

This does not happen because there is some special solace or luxury in these unities. They are, on the contrary, the material requirement both for sign-making and sign-action that in their turn are central to all that gets realized in locality within the universe that human beings inhabit together. Hence they are at the center of what was called life-society-culture making.

But as an inquiry if it has to always create and read codes then there is nothing that is always given as the facts like language. Every time one takes up an inquiry it is more of taking a walk into the unknown, including creation of the knowledge that will have to what could be what in the framework of a given inquiry or discovery depending on the point where one could be. That is, every time one turns to locate the point one reaches a locality in the universe, and every time one does that the locality at that point gets further enriched.

Should not it mean that every time it happens the man grows wiser, and is it not the case that for a locality to get enriched must mean to grow wiser? Codes that human beings create, to me, are motivated to make their existential localities wiser so that one may live ones life wisely in ones locality. At an ultimate level of analysis human beings are given to create *wise localities*, as this is the best they can do in their lives.

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Bhoga Vijaya and the Ideology of Violation :
The Episode of Praradara Sodara Ramanatha and
Ratnaji from

KUMARARAMA CARITE

T.S. Satyanath

1. Introduction

The literary historians of Kannada literature, for their periodization, often use criteria like religion (cf. Jaina, Brahmana, Virashaiva) genre (cf. campū, ragale, vacana, śatpadi, sāṃgatya, tripadi), personalities (cf. campū, basava, kumāravāsa). In addition, qualifying labels such as bhakti, vīra, śrīṃgāra, vairāgya are also used to designate literary works. Although they are efficient typological tools for classification and categorization of literature, these criteria not only fail to neatly fit into the categories proposed but also thematically and ideologically pose problems. In this paper, I have attempted to locate and read Nanjunda's *Kumārarāma carite* in its historical and cultural contexts. In this process, it is also going to become apparent that how futile the periodization criteria proposed for this text and a need for linking different diachronic and synchronic aspects of culture is going to become evident.

2. Historical Background

Kumararama, the hero of Nanjunda's *Kumārarāma carite*, is a historical character belonging to a feudatory dynasty that ruled from Kummata during the early part of the fourteenth century. Historians have noted that between 1310-35 A.D., several Muslim invasions, led by the army of the Delhi Sultanate, were conducted on the Yadava and Hoysala territories. The Muslim invasion was eventually successful in making the entire Deccan accepting the feudatory status. Inscriptions reveal that Kampilaraya, the father of Kumararama had fought several battles against the army of the Hoysala rulers. He appears to have withstood the onslaught of the army of the Sultan of Delhi, Mahammad Bin Tugalaq, at least, initially. However, subsequently, he was defeated in the battle and his severed head was sent as a trophy to the Delhi Sultan. Scholars speculate that the fall of Kummatadurga might have taken place

sometime around 1327 A.D. Kumararama, along with his father must have taken part in this battle, and along with his father might have got killed. However, the inscriptions of the period are silent about Kumararama. Although several inscriptions mention Kampilaraya's name, none make a mention to Kumararama. This is highly intriguing considering the fact that subsequently Kumararama, rather than Kampilaraya, becomes the most significant character of the battles, be it a Hindu literary version, or a Muslim Tazkira version or the popular-folk version or the Kaifiyat version. There are at least, three literary versions available to us which depict the heroism of Kumararama. The earliest one is *Kumārārāmacarite* by Nanjunda which has been ascribed to the early part of the sixteenth century A.D., the next one is Panchalaganga's *Cennarāmana sāmgya*, which has been considered to have been written during the mid-seventeenth century A.D. and the last one is Mahalingaswami's *Bālarāmana sāmgya* which has been depicted in the Yakshagana literature (folk theatre), folk narratives (burra katha and prose) and Kaifiyats. At least four Kaifiyats from the collection of Col. Mackenzie, namely, the Kaifiyat of Daroji village, the Kaifiyat of Kampali taluka, the Kaifiyat of Bhattarahalli and the Kaifiyat of Antapura, collected during the early part of the nineteenth century A.D., give a brief outline of the story of Kumararama. A Muslim version of Kumararama story is available from *Tazkira-yi-Auliya-i-Dakan* (Biographies of the Saints of the Deccan) and appears to have been compiled in the early part of the twentieth century A.D. I have discussed elsewhere (Satyanath 1995, 1996) that the changes in the structures of military architecture, changes in the modes of representations in hero-stones during this period need to be understood as counter constructions to the Muslim domination of the Deccan and that the repeated attempts to rewrite the details of Kumararama's episode actually constitute attempts to heal the deep wounds inflicted upon the memories of cultural life of the region. Through such repeated rewritings in the case of written traditions, and in the case of oral traditions through repeated singing, praising, ritualizing and deifying the death of the slain war hero, the community not only tries to recover from the shock of defeat but also recovers the pride that they had lost due to their defeat in war. Such reworking of the inner details through processes like transformations, inversions, tilts, refractions and subversions provides enough scope for the community to contest synchronic and diachronic hegimonical dominations.

The processes of change in the political power structure in Deccan and the role played by smaller states like that of Kummatadurga needs to be understood as an outcome disintegration of major political dynasties and emergence of a network of military overlords and chieftains known as *pāleyakāras* (camp heads). This further explains how and why during the post-tenth century period, the pastoralist-nomadic-hunting communities, at the time of need (war), use to render militaristic services to the agrarian system (king) in the form of *bēdapade* or '*kirāta-sainya*' (hunter's battalion), were able to capture power and started ruling the smaller regions of Deccan. This is clearly evident from the fact that Kampilaraya, the ruler of Kummatadurga has been praised as a '*nāyaka acārya*' (the master of the heroes / hunters) in an inscription which dates back to the beginning of fourteenth century. In fact, it has been pointed out that the title '*nayaka*' as a surname starts appearing in the inscriptions during the tenth and eleventh century A.D., particularly in the regions which were under the control of the Chalukyas of Kalyani (Hanuru 1983).¹ With the emergence of the Vijayanagara empire, the pastoralist-nomads, forest and hill-dwelling hunters – gatherers and the cattle-keepers who lived in the dry-zone agriculture region ('*khushki*') of Karnataka and Andhra – transformed themselves as warrior groups. They identified themselves as '*nāyakas*' (leaders, heros, hunters) and '*pāleyakāras*' (camp heads) consisting of shepherds, cattle-keepers and hunters, fortified themselves in key-positions and channeled tribute payments to the kings and warrior recruitments into his army. In fact, Stein (1980, 1985) calls the Vijayanagara empire as a 'really loose grid of military overlordships'. In fact, many of the Nayaka rulers and their army chiefs (*pāleyakāras*) were often recruited from the ranks of these dynamic martial fringe people from the interface zone. Thus the appropriation of the ecosystem of the non-agrarian interface zone by the agrarian zone which had taken place long ago, eventually led to the destruction of the ecosystem on which these non-agrarian communities lived. However, on the other hand, it had far reaching effects on the agrarian system. This contact eventually resulted in the inflow of ideology, religion and skills (military and otherwise) of the non-agrarian system into the agrarian system and ultimately dominated the very cultural life of South India

¹ Hanuru (1983) cites Citralingayya (1980) and notes that the term Naayaka was referred as a respect marker to start with the subsequently became a caste marker referring to the hunters.

during the post-twelfth century period. In this connection, Bayly (1989: 23) observes as follows:

Even before the great waves of invasion and settlement which took place after the decline of the great medieval kingdoms, men from plains and forest fringes were pushing into the wet 'core' territories, receiving new traditions and religious symbols from the valley culture and leaving their own marks on the societies of the rice belt. These penetrations became even more wide spread from the middle of the fourteenth century after the old indigenous dynasties had been swept away..."

The ideological constructs of these pastoralist-hunting communities discussed above were certainly not agrarian. The fact that their world view and ideologies were radically different is evident not only from the epithet 'nāyaka' which they ascribed to themselves, clearly suggesting a tribal organization as opposite to a caste based and agrarian one, but also from the confrontational militaristic strategies and skills that they used often in wars against their opponents. This is clearly evident from the fact that where as much stronger states like the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra collapsed without sustaining themselves against the onslaughts of the Muslim army, Kampilaraya appears to have defended Kummatadurga successfully twice against the same army.² Although this is not the place to outline all the differences between the agrarian and these pastoralist-nomad-hunting communities, the implications of their mythology, religion and heroes (trickster as well as heroic) that they constructed through their cultural representations reveal an entirely different ideology at play behind such constructions. It was the ideology that was prevailing in the interface zones, the ideology of the pastoralist-nomads-hunters, that entered and dominated the agrarian system, which actually formulated the future of the agrarian systems in the subsequent centuries. It is actually the descendents of these hunters-pastoralist rulers and their communities that constructed and reworked out the episode of Kumararama.

² It is not just the techniques of warfare known popularly as the Guerilla warfare in which the Marathas (pastoralists) excelled, but the military architecture of Deccan also undergoes a radical change during this period. The capitals and trading towns shift from the open river valleys to the secured tops of fortified hills. Elsewhere I have discussed this in detail (Satyanath 1995).

3. The Text

In this section, I will confine myself to the line of story given in Nanjunda's text. It is written in the *sāmgatya* meter, a four line meter which is usually sung to a tune. The poet himself has called his text 'pada-kavite' and 'pada-kṛti', suggesting its musical and singing component and its folk origin. It contains nearly 5,526 poems which have been distributed over 11 *āśvāsas* and 47 *saṃdhis*. An edited version of this text has been published based on about 27 manuscripts by Devirappa (1959, 1964). Availability of such a high number of manuscripts of the text clearly suggests the high popularity that the text enjoyed before the advent of printing.

The title of the text belongs to the genre of 'carita', a form well known to the students of Kannada literature. Caritas usually describe the life and achievements of the Jaina heroes who attain divinity through salvation. Kumararama's divine nature is amply demonstrated through external and internal evidences. Apart from the fact that the text has been called a carita, there is an inscriptional evidence from Sangur, dating back to the early fifteenth century (A.D. 1407), which mentions about the installation of the image of Kumararama.³ Nearly a century after his death Kumararama gets referred to in the inscription as a divinity. Temples attributed to him have been reported from other places also (Varadarajao 1966). Nuniz, who visited Vijayanagara, mentions that 'Amongst themselves they still worship this king as a saint'. It is quite possible that he was referring to the annual fair that takes place in Kummatadurga in the name of Kumararama (*kumārārāmana jātre*), in which the replicas of severed head of Kumararama are brought from a near by village (Indaragi) and worshipped.

The text highlights Kumararama's heroic exploits in the battles he fought against the kings of Hulyaru, Ballāla, Vīrarudra, *kharipati khapilēśvara*, Nēmi (Khan) and *mātamgi*. Although the text spans over 47 *saṃdhis*, nearly seventeen of them consisting of 2,238 poems out of a total of 5,526 (40.5%) have been devoted to the episode of Kumararama and Ratnaji, his step mother. This episode, in which the step mother falls in love with her step son starts during the celebrations of the festival of speares. Ratnaji's companion Sangayi brought the queen to the balcony to have a look at the decorated heroes assembled

³ Kumārārāmanāthadēvarapratisteya śakavaṛṣa 1329 neya sarva (ji)tu samvatsarada āśvayuja suddha 10 ādityavāradalu mādisida(ru) . . . (Epigraphia Indica), XXII, p.185)

for the festival, and told about each one of them to her. At the first sight of Kumararama himself Ratnaji falls in love with him, without even realizing who he is. She confesses to Sangayi 'that she is heart-broken for him and she can't bear it without uniting with him'. She tells her "that like a lotus (Kamalini) who has not united with the sun (kumudabandhu), my life has become waste (nirarthaka) without having an enjoyment (ramisade) with him" (23.8). She also tells her that "she is in love with him and that her ears for his words, her eyes for his charming personality, her nose for his fragrance, her body for his embrace and her lips for his kiss are eagerly waiting" (23.16). There are several poems expressing such emotions and feelings. Sangayi consoles her and tells her that with the blessings of evil spirits (kutīla dēvatās) she will bring Rama to her feet. Sangayi even takes a vow that till she achieves it, 'she will not bathe, nor tie her hair, nor change her clothes'. The entire samdhi (24) of 'sweet words' consists of assurances of this sort given by Sangayi to Ratnaji. Having heard such assurances, and thinking about Ramanatha, Ratnaji even undergoes a bhāvarati'. "She embraced him, kissed him, passed the beetle leaf juice from her mouth to his, submitted her overwhelming body to him in dream" (24.140). She is also not prepared to believe that it was a dream as her body was still experiencing all signs of an erotic union. The 26th samdhi is called citrapata (portrait), in which Ratnaji gets done a portrait of Ramanatha and engages in love play with it. "Embrace, kiss, caressing, anger, compassion, gaze – she performed countless times to the portrait, thinking that it is really him" (26.48). However, whether it is the influence of the evil spirits or the bad luck of Ramanatha, her desire of getting him to her palace materializes. When king Kampila goes to forest for hunting, Ramanatha could not accompany him due to some reason and stays back. While playing ball game (kamdukakrīde), the ball that he throws comes and falls into the palace of Ratnaji. She gets so excited about the ball which has given her an opportunity to meet Ramanatha. "Having taken that ball in her hand, and having filled with intense desire (kadukāmuki), she pressed it against her heavy breasts, cheek, forehead, arms, thighs and waist, kissed it and looked at it again and again with uncontrolled passion" (32.2). Further the poet exclaims as follows: "If an ornament that had touched the body and mouth of her intensely loved one reaches her hands, which beloved would restrain herself from kissing it and fondling it" (32.3). When Ramanatha actually goes to get the ball from her, she treats him with rare luxurious

things like silk clothes, camphor, kasturi, and other scents. When he asks for the ball to continue the game, "She suggestively told him why going back for the ball game (kamtukakēli), Oh, the one who posses the divine body of the God of love, Manmatha (kamtusanni bhadi vyānga), play the game love with me (kamtukakēliyanesagennodane)" (32.101).⁴ When Ramanatha closes his ears saying Shiva-Shiva and refuses her advances, she tries to embrace him forcefully. "Fast beating heart, sweating body, excited eyes, the trembling body parts due to excitement, with these signs showing up, the beautiful lady came and grasped him" (32.109). Then an argument takes place between the two where each one tries to prove their point using a clever logic and trying to outwit the other. At one stage Ramanatha gets rid of her like 'Rama pushed aside Tataki who had caught hold of him' and walked away. The poet says "Just like the Sun gets away from the face of Rahu, the head mark of the clan of the heroes, got out of the embrace of Ratnaji" (32.154). Having been insulted by the rejection, Ratnaji turns against him, slanders him to his father by saying that the son destroyed the chastity of his own mother. Compare this poem with the one mentioned earlier: "Having come into the palace on the pretext of ball, he, the notorious one, caught hold of me; if you fail to behead him, then I am not your wife and I am the one who is still in his arms" (34.158). The king, without verifying the truth, orders his head to be cut off. The minister saves Ramanatha by hiding him with the help of Indra's magic and produces a severed head which resembles that of Ramanatha. After seeing the severed head of Ramanatha, Ratnaji goes into a lamentation, for her desires have been lost for ever. "If the other person is not willing to unite with you, one can at least perform a bhāvarati in mind; you can stare at him, go asleep and unite with him in dream" (37.5). Subsequently, when the armies of the enemies start attacking Kampila's capital, the minister brings back Ramanatha from the hide-out and the truth is revealed to the king. Ratnaji, in order to escape from shame commits suicide. Ramanatha defeats the Muslim army of Nemi (Nimat Khan) twice, but refuses to fight when Matangi (a eunuch) becomes the head of the Muslim army and meets his death.

⁴ kamtukakēliginnellige pōdape
 kamtusannibha divyānga
 kamtukēliyan esagennodanemda
 rthāntaradimḍaval usure

The following lines constructs the story line based on the *sūcanāpadya* (guide poem) that appears in the beginning of each *samdhī*:

*kampilātmaja-rāmasūlada-habbava-pempinim-mādidan-
osedu (sūlada habba) (6.1 / 21.p)*

'Rama, born to the soul of Kampila celebrated the festival of
spears with grandeur'

*pimtana janmadarnadimd-avanan-ā-kāmtেকannittu nōdidalu
(rāmanāthanaukamdudu) (6.2 / 22.p)*

'from the association of her previous birth, she (Ratnaji)
stared at him'.

ratnājiya vyāmoha (6.3 / 23)

'Ratnaji's desire'

*savinudi yimda samgāyi ratnājiya kivig-usiridaL-amrtavanu
(savindi) (6.4 / 24.p)*

'Using sweet words, Sangayi uttered nectar into the ears of
Ratnaji'

*matte samgāyi melnudigalimdākeyanottinudidu tilupidalu
(melunudi) (7.1 / 25.p)*

'And Sangayi, speaking softly conveyed to her'

*dhīres samgāyi dēvategalan-olisidal-ārādhisi vanadolage
(citrapata) (7.2 / 26.p)*

'Courageous Sangayi appeased the gods by worshipping
them in the wilderness'

*kāmtēyodanemātanādikampila bhūkāmta bēmtēge teralidanu
[bēteya samdhī] (7.3 / 27.p)*

'Having spoken to his beloved, king Kampila departed for
hunting'

*mitraridanepuradolu viharisidanu rātriyolā rāmanātha
[camdrikāvihāra] (7.4 / 28.p)*

'Along with his friends, Ramanatha roamed around the city
in the night'

*tāyigittodabadikeya camdātak ārāyakuvaranaididanu
[tāyima maga] (8.1 / 29.p)*

'Having given the promise to his mother, the prince
proceeded for the ball-game'

rājanīti (8.2 / 30)

'The ethics of politics'

cemdāta (8.3 / 31)

The ball-game'

*Cemda cennigarāma bēduvudake pōge
bamdeyādalukamtupididu [cemdukēlalu hōdudu]* (8.4 / 32.p)

'When charming Rama went to ask for the ball, having lost her shame (Ratnaji) she fell for the god of love'

rāmana śucitege māyādēvistōmavolidupogalidudu [śucivīra]
(9.1 / 33.p)

The group of goddesses of Mayadevi were pleased and praised Rama's chastity'

*rāni rothiya manacimteyakampilaksōnipakamdukr! idanu
[husiya hasara]* (9.2 / 34.p)

'King Kampila noticed the worrying queen Ratnaji and asked her about it'

*kolahelikalupekampilā rāmanāthanan-ulihikomdanu
sacivēmdra [mamtri til aka baicappa]* (9.3 / 35.p)

'Having ordered by the Kampila to kill him, the great minister saved Ramanatha'

mdrajāla (9.4 / 36)

'Indra's magic'

ratnājiya pralāpa (10.1 / 37)

'Lamentations of Ratnaji'

rāmānāthanu horage bamdudu (10.2 / 38)

'End of Ramanatha's exile'

4. Discussion

The episode of Ramanatha and Ratnaji and its details need to be understood in the specific context of the ideology of the hunter-pastoralist rule of Deccan discussed in Section 2. This development of a new sensibility on the site of body is a consequence of a diachronic change that took place from a purely agrarian ideology and world view to the one initiated by the pastoralist-hunter ideology and worldview. Identifying it as 'Nayaka anthropology' and specifically referring it to the Nayaka rulers of South India, Narayana Rao et al (1992: 123) outlines it as follows. However, these characteristics go well beyond the

political region specified by them and is applicable to all Nayaka (hunting) chieftains, otherwise known as pāleyakāras, most of whom called themselves with the epithet Nayaka:

This groping toward the individual – the single feminine human being endowed with a body – is part of a wider process of self-transforming awareness. As already hinted, much of it involves an expanding imagination, which seeks to explore the women's subjectivity in the context of love and bodily experience, always in relation to the male figures surrounding her.

We need to remember the setting of the story. It is the *Rāmayana* and the *Mahābhārata* put together – a two in one model. Ramanatha imitates the foot steps of Rama of the *Ramayana* by remaining loyal to his wife (and father) and rejecting Ratnaji. In fact each samdhi ends with the statement that 'this is the song work (padakṛti) of parādāra-sōdara rāmanātha' (Ramanatha, the brother of other's wives). It is set into the *Mahābhārata* frame by calling Ramanatha as an avatāra of Arjuna and a gana of Shiva in Kailasa and at the same time, Ratnaji as that of Urvashi. Though the versions given in Kaifiyats, folk literature and for that matter, Mahalinga's written version, does not make any mention to the *Mahābhārata* frame, the extensive internal monologues of Ratnaji and her relentless efforts to persuade Ramanatha form an integral part of all the versions. Commenting on this aspect Narayana Rao et al (1992:124) observes as follows:

The women heroines hesitate, express ambivalence, defy convention, state their frustration, propose an empirically grounded ideology of violation. The latter point is crucial: the major stories all deal in transgression, in ways that transcend by far the inherited purāṇic narratives on which they build. But the selection is, in itself, highly suggestive; this is the age when tales of anti-normative violation, always of a sexual character, fascinate the elite (as they seem always to have fascinated the folk narrators) and demand literary form on a grand scale.

The text under discussion is not the only text which deals with such a bold theme. Narayana Rao et al (1992) has brought to our notice a series of such texts (cf., Ahalyōddharaāmu, Sāramgadharma etc.) from the Nayaka period to substantiate the point that they are making. The story of Sāramgadharma has been very popular in Telugu and is available in

several folk and literary versions. Sāramgadhara is enticed by his father's courtesan wife Citrāngi. He rejects her advances like Kumararama. She turns against him and slanders him to his father, the king. He in turn orders him maimed and left to die in the forest. Siddha Matsendranātha finds the wounded prince and helps him in regenerating his lost limbs. Subsequently Sāramgadhara becomes the great Siddha Saurāngi. Several folk versions of this story are also available in Kannada.

The theme of violation of sexual norms, either in reality or in dream, has been a matter of interest to Kannada Bhakti poets, in particular the Virashaiva poets. Ohila has been claimed to have worshipped the breasts of his beloved as śivalimga. The image of Vitajamgama, the sensuous mendicant, is a famous episode in the hagiographies of Basavanna. Although several of them appear in his hagiographies, like the case of a Vitajamgarma who is given back a new life by Basavanna, or the case of Vitajamgama who begs and takes away all the ornaments from Basavanna's house. However, the most famous one is the one in which Basavanna offers his own wife Māyidēvi to a Vitajamgama, as no courtesan was available for service on that particular day. The episode is well attested from the earliest hagiography, the Basavrajadēvaragale by Harihara (c. 1200 A.D.). In Chamarasa's Prabhulimgalīle (c. 1450 A.D.) Kāmalate, the temptress dancer and the tāmasik aspect incarnate of Parvati, attempts to seduce Allama, but is unsuccessful. However, though he belongs to the tradition of Viraktas, Chamarasa does not appear to be as disinterested in sensualities as the tradition claims him and shows a keen interest in the depiction of the seduction. Even Jaina poets are not as much ascetic as they claim themselves to be. Janna, who called himself 'kurulgala savanam' (the mendicant with hairs) brings in an unusual story of the queen Amrtamati developing a relationship with the dwarf Mahut Astāvamka in his Yarūthara carite (1209 A.D.). The story though goes back as far as to the Kathāsaritsāgara has been reworked out several times during the period of tenth to thirteenth centuries in several languages, namely, Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, Kannada and Tamil, out of which Janna's work has been claimed to be utterly bold and highly erotic (Raghavachar 1944). It needs to be pointed out, that though he is depicting the life of a Thirthankara in his Anamtanātha Purāna (1230 A.D.), Janna's interests are more involved in the depiction of the episode of Camdasasana, in which he kidnaps his friend's wife, keeps her in confinement and forces her to yield to his desires. As we have

noticed earlier in the classic example of Kumararama, here too it is a case of charm of violation that never actually takes place or takes place only in dream, but portrayed through the intense emotions represented by a male. Further more, Janna has also been claimed to be the author of an erotic text *smarataṃtra*. Without any hesitation and seeing to contradiction to his claim (the ascetic with hairs), he has praised himself as 'bharatasuratasās travilāsa' (an expert in the erotic art) and as 'abinava madana' (Manmatha reincarnate). Janna's works, in particular, the episode of Amrtamati and that of Camdasasāna, have been the subject matters for intense criticism and heated debate in modern Kannada criticism (cf. Sreekantaiya 1947). Whereas Janna's characterizations discussed above have been considered as the speciality of the problem of love (pranaya samasyeyavisistate) by scholars, Ratnakaravarni's depiction, another Jaina poet belonging to the same time period, that is much closer to the text kumārārāmacarita introduces the concept of bhōga vijaya. The Kannada literary critics have perceived it as the problem of Yoga and Bhoga (yōgabhōgada todaku) in Ratnakaravarni. He was the court poet in the court of Bhairasa Odeya, who ruled from Karkala in coastal Karnataka and had been hailed with the epithet of 'srmgārakavi'. His Bhatāvaibhava (1557 A.D.) is an interesting work as it deviates significantly from specified Jaina Canonical conventions. First of all, Bharata's episode has to come as a part of the life of the first Thirthankara. However, Bharata becomes the main character of the text in him. In addition, not only that the 'pamcakalyāās', the five stages that comes in the life of a Jina has been attributed to Bharata, who is only a Cakravartī, but also that instead of the usual five stages, five new stages, namely, bhōgavijaya, digvijaya, yōgavijaya, arkakīrti vijaya and mōksavijaya have been introduced. It is the bhōgavijaya and in particular, in bhōga samdhi that the text transforms into an ocean of erotica; his each wives becomes a wave in his erotic dialogue" (Shamaraya and Rajeswaraiya 1964).

In the discussion so far, we have noticed that there is a gradual change in the history of Kannada literature starting from the eleventh century A.D. onwards, in which the depiction of the charm of violation of the norms becomes central to the theme. Whether the violation takes place or not, or takes place only in dream or in the mind of the person, the poets, from folk as well as court alike, take keen interest in the depiction of this violation. If we can notice that these violations reach the highest point with profound complexity and maturity at the time when the Nayaka (hunter-pastoralist) rulers dominate the political scene

of South India, if we can also notice that many of these tales have their folk origin, like that of *Yarātharacarita Kumārārāma carite*, then the direction of movement of ideas, ideology and world view becomes clearly evident. Looking at the entire scene diachronically, not only the rulers came from a non-agrarian background with their ideologies and world views, but also the stories, themes, episodes, and the genre itself (*sāmgatya*) came from a 'desi' background.

Such a transformation in the ideology of violation could be seen on a much wider canvas. The emergence of courtesans experimenting bold poems of the sort we discussed could be seen in Rangajamma and Ramabhadramba from the Tanjavur court. Chinnasani, the wife of Krishnadevaraya, the famous king of Vijayanagara was a courtesan is evident from the word *sani* attached to her name. In fact, Anatakrisnasharma (1954) writing about the court life during the Vijayanagar period calls it 'the *rasikate* during the time of the *Rayas*'. These new articulators of knowledge, status and power located in the very site of their bodies are the only ones who can articulate poems of the sort that Muddupalani wrote in the eighteenth century Madurai: "only the man who has touched the courtesan's breasts can become the commander of a fort and only one who has stared in her face can be a king". The court painting, developed during the time of Vijayanagar, subsequently travels to the courts of Bijapur on the one hand and to that of the Nayaka rulers on the other. This particular style, not only famous for its sensuous depiction and plump bodies but also for their numerical strength suggesting the exploitation of the medium to its maximum extent. We have already seen how Ratnaji gets a portrait of Ramanatha made in order to engage in love play with it. This festivity to eyes and an upgraded importance to visual details are the outcome of a shift in the epistemological and soteriological aspects of shift from Yoga (closing of sensory perception) to Bhoga. The south Indian drama formally takes its birth during this period. Karantha (1963) notes that the Yakshagana manuscripts are available only from seventeenth century A.D. onwards. It is equally interesting to note that Kumararama's episode is performed in the Yakshagana style even today. Even otherwise, the episodes of Yakshagana contain rich and suggestive use of erotic language. In general, drama, be it the Telugu court drama like Purushottama Dikshitadu's *Annadānamahānātakamu* (Great drama of the gift of food), or as its colophon says *Satramarulanātakam* (Love in the soup-kitchen) or the Tamil folk drama like the *Nondinātakam* (Cripple's play), usually a Kallar protagonist,

who is in love with a Devadasi, is made to turn to his profession of stealing horses, after she makes him a bankrupt. He is caught in the process of stealing and is punished by severing one or two of his limbs. The limb(s) is restored after a pilgrimage to the deity. Or it could be the plays like *śanimahātme*, where the king's limbs are cut off due to disrespect that he shows to the god and are restored after he submits himself to the god and appeases him. Once again the site for inscribing is the body, be it mutilation or rejuvenation. In this connection Kamararama's enforced banishment into the hideout and reviving him out of the hideout fight the Muslim army is a rejuvenation with enhanced power. We must remember that in Indian mythology the severed head becomes much more powerful than they were before, like Rahu and Ketu became so powerful after they are beheaded, that they could swallow the sun and the moon causing the eclipse (*grahana*), a disruption of the world order. At the folk level, this rejuvenation of Kumararama has become an annual cyclic event. I mentioned earlier that in the annual fair (*jātre*) that takes place at Kummatadurga, the replicas of the severed heads are brought in procession for the ritual. We should notice that within the text itself a rejuvenation (body reclamation) takes place to fight against the Muslim army and to protect Kummatadurga from a catastrophe. The ritualistic rejuvenation that takes place at Kummatadurga every year suggests the metatextual rejuvenation of Kummararama as a devine being, who protects his believers in an entirely different plane.

Thus the hypertrophy of violation of norms, be it court or among the folk, adopts highly innovative and exhaustive thematic patterns. The ideology of Bhoga, as we saw in the *bhōgavijaya* of Janna, Ratnakaravarni and Nanjunda introduces a corresponding theory of violation which fits in very well into the spirit of the political rulers and their ideology, the genres, whether it is being worked out by the court elite or the folk. It has been reported that several manuscripts of *Kumārārāmacarita* contain only the episode of Kumararama and Ratnaji. This selective reception further suggests the popularity of the specific episode other than the entire text, which further substantiates the point made about *bhōgavijaya* or the ideology of violation of norms.

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Lettering (in) Nightmares : Reading Ajanta

D. Venkat Rao

Philosophical reflection or reflective thought in Telugu is visible only in contemporary Telugu literature. There is no independent philosophical tradition as such in Telugu. Whatever can claim a philosophical status derives its existence either from Sanskrit or other received traditions. This may be true in the context of other national literatures and languages in India. But, it can be argued, literature does not have to create or disseminate philosophical systems. Indeed, one can argue, literature in a way actively undermines philosophical theorems and circles.

As is well-known, written literary heritage in Telugu is customarily traced from the middle of eleventh century with Nannaya's "translation" of the *Mahabharata* into Telugu. Literary historians identify various periods and genres stretching from the epic to the lyric, theater to the novel, story to essay during this millennium time-frame. Literary historical work in Telugu is entirely chronological and thematic or biographical and descriptive in its rendition of literary works. Literary criticism, as an intense and controlled engagement with specificity of the work and form is rarely to be found. What gets circulated as literary criticism, especially as it seeks a historical lineage, remains derivative from the Sanskrit heritage of "poetics". Philosophical and epistemological inquiries into the matter of language, once an obsessive preoccupation of the Sanskrit and other critical traditions, seems to glimmer here and there in literary works. Academic literary critics, from various universities, are busily engrossed in catching up with a Rene Wellek or some formalist lingo. Otherwise, literary journalism, and polemics of rage (based on deeply personal equations) cover the field of response to Telugu literature. The latest rage in the field happens to be "postmodernism"¹.

¹ There is enormous amount of "historical" material on Telugu literature. From the major works and trend setters for commentaries, one can cite a few as typical in their approach. See for instance, Divakarla Venkatavadhani, *Andhra Vangmaya Charitramu*, (1958; Hyderabad: Andhra Saraswata Parishattu, 1967); C. Narayana Reddy, *Adhunikandhra Kavityamlo Sampradayalu – Prayogamulu*, (Hyderabad: Visalandhra, 1962); the multi-volume literary history of Arudra, *Samagra Andhra Sahityamu*,

Lurid Figures

There are very few writers in Telugu who address the fundamental concerns of literary writing; there are very few who engage with unformulated "philosophical" reflections in the context of poetic form. Ajanta's position in contemporary Telugu poetry is singular in this regard. Ajanta is a contemporary poet. For several years he worked on the editorial staff of the long-standing Telugu newspaper, *Andhra Prabha*. Although Ajanta's poetry dates back to the 1940s, *Swapna Lipi*² brings his writings together for the first time. His work is not only sparse but ascetically inaccessible. No wonder there is hardly any critical writing (beyond meager weekend newspaper reviews). This paper attempts an analysis of his collection in the light of the concerns expressed earlier.

Ajanta is a difficult poet. But even before we encounter the difficulties we are exposed in his poetry to a set of devastatingly lurid images; they mark us even when we deny them. These disturbing images encroach upon us as severed hands clashing, wounded, broken dreams, invisible eyes spitting fire, voices choked in terror, wounded tongues and self-mutilating humans. They terrify and stun us in our helplessness. How each line is going to end, which scene is going to possess us, what sound will deafen us in terror - these nightmarish fears haunt us in this writing. This is a kind of ghost-dance that we are exposed to here.

Brutalisation of life in the banality of everyday violence, violations against communities and individuals are the burden of Ajanta's poetry. Brutalisation, Ajanta shows, permeates every established form or convention in our contemporary life. No wonder he disparages the most sedimented conventions, such as religion and

(Madras: M. Seshachalam & Co., 1965-68); Pingali Lakshmikantham, *Andhra Sahitya Charitra*, (1974; Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy, 1976); S.V. Rama Rao, *Telugulo Sahitya Vimarsa: Avatarana - Vikasamulu*, (Hyderabad: Pasidi Prachuranalu, 1974). Velcheru Narayana Rao, *Telugulo Kavita Viplavala Swarupam*, (1978; Hyderabad: Hyderabad Book Trust, 1988). Apart from these, the week-end reviews in newspapers such as *Andhra Prabha*, *Vaarta*, *Andhra Jyothi* are quite significant in circulating literary journalism and gossip.

² Ajanta, *Swapna Lipi*, collected by Tripuraneni Srinivas, (Hyderabad: Kavittvam Prachuranalu, 1993). All further references are given in the text. All translations from the Telugu are mine.

patriotism. The bitter sarcasm of the following lines is insistent in his poetry. The poem "India, India", for instance, ends with:

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!
Salvation is more important even when man dies of hunger.
Long live patriots! (p. 44)

At another place, in "Dateline Hyderabad", we hear

"There is only one man, one god"
a Public demon pours out tears fearfully
in the city centre. (p. 46)

The two most conventional sources of value - religion and patriotism - cease to enjoy such status in Ajanta's poetry. But what can replace these sources? What is the source for sustaining one's sense of right and wrong in such situation?

Even when Ajanta writes about the banality of everyday life, about the topical, day-to-day issues, one cannot say that his poetry is derivative with regard to identifiable historical events (such as Hyderabad communal riots, Rajiv Gandhi's death etc.). Even when they resonate contemporary events, his writings suggest a deeper, a more profound friction. To reduce this friction to some well-known social events, to cover it with some simple social concern is a mistake in the context of Ajanta's poetry. The friction manifests in nightmarish forms in his poetry.

As he addresses the question of "humanity" beyond the conventional repositories of value (religion and patriotism), Ajanta sustains his composition without allowing its reduction. For instance the line "When the midnight devastation awakens" (p. 50) appears to be in continuity with other lines: "Isn't that the midnight indication? I think the traitor got up from the sleep..." (p. 47) and "In the middle of the night one's own dead body in a gully..." (p. 45). But between the first and the other two lines, there is at least forty two years distance. It is easy to find, in other words, historical parallels for Ajanta's recent poetry and read the work as a response to or reflection of the events. Yet such a reading cannot open up the nightmare lettering of Ajanta.

For Ajanta, literary writing is a most explosive activity. In the poem "Counting: Dreams, Tears", while writing about letters that demand lives, suffocated sentences, gun-powder poems, the poet realizes that literary writing is really an underground secret movement. Yet all the events this movement embodies or exemplifies are verbal

literalizations of dream-works. In this movement the rebelling realities are: "The tide of wounded waters crashing on the town is remarkable". Under the impenetrable canopy, the poet asks, does the night reddened man's face? Are the hands going red in rage? Is the man going red! Are the roads going red? Yet these "truths" or "realities" are all desired or wished for effects only. They also appear to be comments on the utterly hopeless and helpless situation that the speaker seems to have come across. "What have I done/ What could I have done?" repeats another voice in the poem (p. 41). Being acutely aware of their status Ajanta weaves them in the ambivalence of dreamwork. Their possibility or realization remains equivocal: every wish and anticipation terminates in suspense. We get equivocal endings: "(isn't it) falling?", "(are they) becoming?" etc.

The poet who has no grasp on the specificity of literary writing can be easily caught in this kind of situation. The moment the poet is tempted by the word "movement" (of a "political" cause), literary writing becomes instrumental. Sentimentalized incidents and moralizing discourses fill the form. Even here a kind of wishfulfilment is at work; the poet here treats it with utmost seriousness. Poetry writing is furthering the cause of revolution here. This naive poet can learn the alphabet of subver(sion)ting of/in poetry from Ajanta.

Ajanta is acutely conscious of the relation between pain and language, between the so-called "inner" and "outer" world. There is no surrendering to metaphysics or idealism in his work. His poetry shows that there cannot be any transparent or unmediated continuity between pain and inner and outer worlds. In his work all figured allusions to inner/outer worlds are essentially dream images. As these figures or images obsessively repeat in his poetry their determined material and signifiatory status gets suspended.

Although Ajanta calls his work *Dream Script* (*Swapna Lipi*) the work of these two words is divided. Dream signs are indeterminable and equivocal; whereas letters take shapes, lettering is fundamentally a form-giving activity. The dream-work is always already inaccessible to us. What we can have at the most is only a secondary revision - our effort to verbalize, recount or narrate our dream experience. Our efforts to recapitulate it — verbally or non-verbally indicate our inescapable need to depend on the mediating role of "language" (verbal/nonverbal).

Ajanta's *Dream Script* suggests an enigmatic relation between dreams and script or writing. Ajanta does not try to gloss or explicate the bewildering and devastating signs of the dream world; his work does

not aim at solving enigmas or purveying significances of dream signs. On the contrary, he unravels the most settled aspects, events of our everyday lives and draws our attention to their enigmas, their complexities. He makes the familiar strange. His work asks us to recognize the unfamiliar crypted in the scripts of our most sedimented practices:

*The language I speak is different
When the death-wish is flaring
In man's innards
The noise of secret doors opening -
The poetry I write is different (p. 13).*

When one considers literary writing as a fundamental struggle for newer ways of responding to the world, newer ways of articulating the received, as an effort to transform the given - Ajanta's writings begin to become legible. At the centre of his concern are language, modes of articulation and our conventions of reception. These concerns do not appear in a thematized form in a particular poem, but repeat in an obsessive manner across all his work. He chooses despairingly morbid imagery to circulate the concerns. Formless, this peculiar engagement with the given (in the widest sense) manifests as a kind of violence of language, in/on/and through itself. Language is simultaneously the subject and object of violence here. Although the speaking voice in this work is an illusory subject (a dream image) - the violent struggle with/in language this subject brings-forth cannot be treated as illusory. The writing embodies the inscriptions of this violent struggle.

The speaking subject in Ajanta's writing has no determined form or specific appearance. "He" is a scripted being. Ajanta shows this powerfully in his poem "Stones Flung at me are my Letters":

*For me there is no shelter.
For me there is no dance...

Sitting on the void emptily
I write my poem on falling stars...

Where the scaffold of darkness is erect
Sitting silently on silence
I write my poem on lamps in the winds.

For me there is no form
My form is my poem. (p. 50).*

Now that every poem has a form, that Ajanta seeks his form in a poem, one might declare him a "formalist". But that would be a hasty judgment. Ajanta never concerned himself with superficially formal or narrowly conceived linguistic experiments (other "modern" poets like Pattabhi did). His fundamental concern is with language and this is not a "linguistic" concern.

Language in Ajanta's writing is not an indivisible plenum. On the contrary, it is a mutilated, deeply afflicted, lacerating body of existence. Although the use of sound-effects for creating high, epic-serious poetic affect is not new in Telugu (Sri Sri is an outstanding example in "modern" times), Ajanta's sound-weavings in language do not provide us any thematically coherent and sustained narratives. There is no recourse to the mythic tradition in his poetry. Ajanta is definitely a city poet. And his city is a shattered and noisy soundscape:

*Hanging nooses in my imaginings,
Shackles my words
Stones hurled at me my alphabet. (p. 50)*

When language is a violent, violating and violated machine, to inhabit it, to make it speak, to speak through it and not to be able to sever oneself from it — such a relation implies a sacrificial or regenerative activity. Ajanta's work lives, performs such an activity. Here neither the locution, the utterance nor that which brings-forth speech has any transcendental or divine aura; Ajanta sees to it that his locutions, word-chains do not seek shelter under such forces.

It is, however, important to note that even this sacrificial or regenerative act in Ajanta is not aimed at some grand, triumphal goal; it is not organized by any motivated agency. The self-effacing or self-erasing activity itself is a mode of existence not to be subsumed under some glorified teleological schema. At the same time, it is a kind of existence which needs persistent repetition of these self-lacerating performances. Ajanta's poetry embodies/enacts precisely such activity/existence.

The *Dream Script* persistently suggests that language has a bodily physical or material existence: "Every letter is a man. Every man an alphabet. I believe that like human facial features, like the formation of human body (organs), letters too have a shape, valence, meaningfully appropriate movement, a rhythm, a dance, a colour, a flavour" (p. 3). No wonder, for Ajanta the commodified language of everyday life peddled by the learned, purveyed through the telly is a dead language. In the

poem "Slum-Clearance" we hear: All dead language, dead language; the stage is filled with sound-carcasses (p. 53). The only way, however, this life-less language, for Ajanta, can regain a new life is by seeking a body for shelter. But such sheltering body ought not to be some commodified language. Alphabetic engendering (or lettering) can be accomplished only through the new born, or literally "the just then born". In other words, as long as "life" inhabits ossified and reified forms it manifests only as sound-carcasses. Such life can never be a living, breathing entity. Only when this breath and life manifest for the "first time", without moving under the prevailing shadows, manifest in irreducible indeterminacy that language can have an other-generation, or a regeneration. This re-turn or re-birth of language is exemplified in Ajanta through the figure of the new-born:

*Letters do not have two lives
unless they enter the body of a new born baby
Or till they make the streetman's body their shelter.
Letters do not have another life. (p. 53).*

Ajanta's work insistently puts to work the relation of continuity and discontinuity between language and body. Language must seek shelter even in a man in the street ("streetman"), the tramp. Yet in this work the man-in-the-street cannot be easily identified with or reduced to either some hypothetical or convenient everyman - or even some empirical historical referent from the "real" world. In the literary labyrinths of Ajanta's work, among his multiple linguistic thoroughfares, gullies and side-streets, the "streetman" perennially appears and disappears, comes-forth and exits. More significantly, this emerging and exiting streetman has no unified well-fed body. He wanders in a dilapidated body. Recognizing the face of this streetman is as impossible as determining the language of the new-born. The *Dream Script* states this. The re-emergence, the future of language is contingent upon its coming-forth in un presupposed forms, structures that are not already decided.

Ajanta's meditative struggle seems to be for such an undefined existence: "This is the very secret of the *Dream Script*. In the day-to-day devastations (catastrophes) of life my strange performances are my new syntax (grammar)" (p. 3). But to reduce these performances to some sedimented Vedanta school or ossified school poetics is not only a futile exercise; such an account cannot claim to have read Ajanta's work.

*Everyday I keep watching...
 Letters being hanged.
 In the shadows of dazzling mid-noon swords of sun-rays
 Has anyone seen
 the dance of letters?
 Has anyone heard
 the rhythms of letters in the deeps of heart? (pp. 55-57).*

Ajanta's writings do not conform to any received tradition of poetic language easily; there are no efforts at delighting the reader with protocols of propriety in the choice of words, emotions, sounds and themes. The violence of Ajanta's idiom destroys any such secure traditions.

It is important to recognize that the figures and techniques of this composition cannot be easily made to conform with any -"ism". Even when someone can detect a precedence to Ajanta at the level of words ("diction"), the contexts of sentence and poem in which those words circulate, transform their significance. Even when the obsessive figures Ajanta brings forth are morbid in nature, his writing cannot be accused of some perverted morbidity. To assume that behind the lurid figures of his poetry lurks Ajanta's own psychological illness is a mistake. For to assume the (alleged) contexts of origins of literary work as the sources of proper meaning is to propagate a reductive approach to the work. More importantly, such an approach fails to recognize the specificity of the literary art. "I have no use of dates", writes Ajanta, "There are no calendars in poetry. I cannot tolerate the term sequential growth..." (p. 4). For even when contexts of origin are inventoried from the writer's "personal" psychobiography, his/her socio-historical, geographical contexts, or even cultural conventions, linguistic traditions - even when such investigations are necessary and important such searches cannot show the specificity of literary acts. As a standard practice such investigations into contexts of origin end up giving literary texts a derivative status (contemporary Telugu writing and literary criticism, when it is not animated by polemics of rage, whines under such derivative procedures).

As long as we assume that it is only through a recourse to the provenance of the work that we can understand it - our fundamental task of engaging with the given remains unattended. If the literary act is understood to be an imitation of a pre-existing source or as a communicative medium of that source, then literary writing (not just

from literary side) is simply a limited activity. Indeed literary act could be described as that effort which while distancing and differentiating itself directly or indirectly from the so-called conditions of origin, moves in voice and in silence along visible and invisible paths. Such an effort cannot be exhausted by the conventions of disciplinary, generic, period or linguistic analyses.

Although literary act is involved with conditions of origin, it may be appropriate to describe such involvement as an attempt to *confound* provenances rather than as a confrontation with them. For, confrontational or oppositional relation suggests a discontinuity. Whereas confounding complicates one's own relation to provenance or the past: it asserts neither a continuity nor discontinuity nor does it allow both in a harmoniously reconcilable proportion. It is this open-ended engagement with the fundamental conditions of possibility that the literary act performs. Such (un)common specificity cannot be confined to the institutionally formalized discourse called "literature". The peculiarity (of the literary) helps us in shifting our attention from the periodized disciplinary phases and isms (such as *Purana*, *Prabandha*, *Bhava*, *Navya*, *Abhyudaya*, etc., in Telugu) to the more crucial term/word/concept/figure signifying act or activity - *pra-kriya* the literary act, the acts (or activities) of literature. What is involved here is really a question of practice - that is, what is it that we do and how are we doing what we are doing. The concern of the *act* here is not for any theorization but it comes-forth as a question of practice. When we are confronted by the questions of practice if the models and modes already prevailing and surrounding us satisfy us — there is no place for literary act(s) there; or, literary activity is convened under received names or titles there. What we seem to learn from a rigorous engagement with the literary is really the interminable question of how to act (i.e., how to live) in a given situation — especially in the absence of any acceptable forms of action. How to act in that absence, in that night of non-knowledge where there are no shelters of respite or rescue?

No wonder that in Ajanta's poetry the most persistently recurring metonymy, structuring his entire collection is the road:

For the roads my salute...
Walking on the roads I am writing poetry...
Roads my life... Roads my secret signs...
Roads, the syntax of my living...
Haven't I dedicated my dream-studded body to

Roads?...

Roads my entirety.. (pp. 13-16).

Ajanta's roads are peopled with the insulted and injured, hurt and mutilated, dark and distraught, murderous and simmering, chilling and ravenous. The road in the *Dream Script* is a path without destiny; it is a treacherous trapdoor: "Disappearing from the middle of the road walking is death." Yet only where these roads converge, writes Ajanta, there is a new spell or life. The figure of the road stands directly in contrast to the stabilizing shelters or language in Ajanta's writing. Palaces are like disciplined, standardized sentences for Ajanta, people are hanged in those structures, he says. From these palaces of sheltering letters any cry or dance would amount to only a suicidal scenario. Strangely, poetry cannot be made out of tormented letters, says Ajanta. No wonder his poems are replete with hallucinatory roads; these function as exit paths from castles of letters.

If there is anything which has unequivocal status in Ajanta's poetry it is certainly the difference he shows between the figure of road and the image of palace. The road, as already suggested, does not have a univocal significance here. Even when the road is replete with scenes of devastation and catastrophe, it is also the site for new generations. "Even new language sprouts only there" writes Ajanta. Whereas the castles and palaces Ajanta sketches have no confounding, perplexing existence. The moment they come into their gloried existence like disciplined theorems and sentences, they continue the life-less existence of machines. Structurally, both the figure of road and the embodied word have a similar status in Ajanta's writings:

Roads my theme

Roads my syntax

Roads my lexicon

My only world, of letters (p. 16).

Letters do not erect palaces in the *Dream Script*. Every letter and sentence here disturbs us like a tortured self, devastates us like a dilapidated body. In the rhythms of his words and letters, in the weaving of his illusory roads we are repeatedly confronted with severed hands, terrified, traumatized sounds, shattered bodies, rustles of skeletons emerging flowers, decapitated lamp-posts, devastated trees, destructive machines. All along we see crumbling trees, roads filled with carcasses, where the sun vomits blood, roads that throw dust into eyes surround us.

It is impossible to separate the figures of shattered bodies from those of devastated roads. Shattered bodies, fragmented language, roads filled with equivocal voices of the dead suspended: these "three" recurring figures suggest a fundamental issue in Ajanta's work. Conventionally these very figures of road, body and language are the most entrenched metaphors or indicators of the existence, destiny and shelter of divine and human ontologies. It is impossible to come across the articulations of the human/divine pair outside the operation of these figures. And in engaging with these very figures, in engulfing them in his everyday devastation Ajanta questions the basis of these inherited resources of existence. As a part of this questioning that Ajanta frequently identifies palaces and castles (symbols of allegedly stable and venerated resources of the past) not as life-generating and nurturing sources but as life-less, life-depriving machines.

Roads in Ajanta's writing have no destinations. In "The scene of Collapsing Trees":

*There is no hope
No chance
Not even a sign anywhere that
Some road will lead to a destination.* (p. 23).

The roads filled with dilapidated bodies encroach upon us in different ways. But, can these roads, these enigmatic a-destinal paths of devastation echoing voices from the dead and mutilated be anything other than the dream script Ajanta chiseled out? These roads, no doubt, here and there resemble our city streets; but abruptly, cluelessly they flow away into and weave out strange inscriptions of the dream script: they letter nightmares. Someone who knows only our municipal roads finds it impossible to move among these secret twinings, these labyrinthine destiny-less roads. This seems to be the challenge Ajanta flings at his readers: What do you do with the given when all the available forms of response are inadequate — especially when the given seems to confront us with the fragmented, the incomplete — how do you respond? What does it mean to transform the given?

Death Notes

Is there anything like death experience? If so, can that be made legible, can that be written about? This is the most interminable issue in Ajanta's writing. There is no exaggeration in writing that Ajanta's word-chains

have burst forth from the struggle with death-experience. It may be possible to have a glimpse of this struggle when we contemplate on the insistently repeated concerns, sounds, motifs and figural language of Ajanta's work. Throughout the entire collection of the *Dream Script* what inextricably haunts us is the death-language. Sound-carcasses, voices after death, "even after death the man continues to speak", the rustle of blossoming skeletons, human sacrifice on censored letters, "The sun-rays' picture-writing on crimson wounds", certainties of death, the wounded standing nudely in the house of death, songs of liberty after death: the death-language resonates in a thousand voices. It appears both as a warning and as an invitation (especially in the opening poem, "Anta oke Sabdam" [The Same Sound]).

In the "Curfew Shadows", we begin to realize slowly the chilling news that the voice that consoles the frightened speaker in the language of death: "Our names are no longer in the hit-list" says the voice. This deceptive reassurance is consolingly credible in the beginning. But as the poem moves we get to know that "The stamp of death is indestructible", that both the voices in the conversation are only cemetery sounds: "Aren't we secure now in the loving palms of the earth!", says the consoling voice and gives the speaker a bouquet. (pp. 47-48).

Death-language here does not mean intimations of death, nor does it mean dead-language or language of death. All these idioms, to use a conventional metaphor, have their provenance on "this" side of the *Vaitarini*. In other words, in all these idioms death is projected simply as an anthropomorphized, deadly object. A language that uses such idioms can only be a "poetic" or stylized conventionality. No wonder we find coherent accounts, narratives with beginning-middle-and-ends in such traditions. One can find transcendentalized shelters in these idioms and narratives. It is futile to measure Ajanta's work with such determined or constituted *pramanas*.

In Ajanta's writing we encounter the death-struggle at least in three "forms" or "modes"—(i) deathtorn/prone being in daily life; (ii) traumatizing nightmares; and above all (iii) voices that burst forth by tearing open the body. There are no clearly demarcated boundaries among these forms/modes. They constantly overlap and metamorphose each other. What is remarkable and striking at the core of these forms is something we are no longer unfamiliar: mutilated and violated bodies on the one hand and amputated and fragmented sound-bodies on the

other. It is important to note here that the afflicted body and tormented self are not merely the objects of suffering; they are primarily the centre of cognition itself. Words are not just words, bearers of some rational or sensuous processes but really are the perpetrators of action - an action from which they are never sufficiently freed. Words/language form(s) the object and agent of action. This double structure of agent and victim, both in the "same", manifesting in the forms of fragmented, mutilated bodies and disrupted tormented language, is eminently a way of living in Ajanta's writing.

"I have seen my dead bodies lakhs of times", says a voice in a poem (p. 29). In another poem we see the speaking voice of the poem as the reader of newspaper gradually succumbs to the brutality (described) in the newspaper. A virus spreads from the paper and colonizes the reader-speaker. As a result:

*Thorns fill my hand
Thorns
Piercing-forth like needles
at length from my fingers. (p. 44).*

The *Dream Script* does not show any clearly marked source of brutality, any singular agency that perpetrates it which is differentiated and distanced from the speaking/reading/writing voices. This does not mean there is a unification of all these voices. The happenings, events of our daily life, the events, the events that are made to happen, the ability to endure whatever happens — all these are occurrences on the twisting, winding roadlanguages on which we are abandoned to a-wandering. The *Dream Script* reiterates this. The tortured body in "Date-Line Hyderabad" only knows that people unknown to "it" killed it without even knowing who "it" is.

*Somebody trampled on me
Someone pierced swords into me
Hacked my hands and legs. (p. 45).*

We do not know the cause of this. From this body the song of the dead asks the speaker to lend "it" all his organs so that "it" could search its family. All the organs — excepting its eyes. The voice of the dead refuses the organ of sight from the speaker. Now the speaker, in turn is a body without organs — condemned to see the wild slaughter around "it". The difference and distance between the song of the dead-suspended and the lyric of the living keeps changing.

One can read the *Dream Script* as an attempt to give form to death-struggle. We cannot ignore the articulated and inarticulate forms floating from this script discontinuously. Needless to repeat that all these forms are shattered ones, fractured faces, wounded portions and cracked skulls. What is remarkable here is that every attempt of the writer in capturing the "form" caught in the death-struggle ends up figuring it as the speaker's own double. There is no easy thematization of the death-struggle.

Everyone walking reflects me... (p. 14)

*"How strange both are alike" -
people around me are surprised.
Why, I have seen my dead-bodies
Lakhs of times on the road.* (p. 29).

Here some kind of unending (abyssal) reflexivity transforms, metamorphoses the "self's" forms. In this abyss even "Ajanta" is also a perennially transforming, fractured image. Nothing exemplifies this reflexive torsions better than the word-chains that Ajanta chisels and moulds in himself. The language of the *Dream Script* (displaces the division between the representational function of language and its represented message; the *Dream Script* confounds the division. This is Ajanta's stunning achievement. "In order to ascertain", writes Ajanta, "that I am still alive, I have seen my own death several times in the centre of streets.... I can't recognise myself in the process when poetry is emerging." (p. 4).

Traditionally the relation between language and intention or message is represented as an instrumental one. The linguistic word or sentence is deemed to be a message carrier, a vehicle that transfers the writer's intention to the reader. This anteriority of meaning/sense is identified with or located in the intention or mind or the writer. This assigns the writer a supreme, all-knowing position of privilege. Even the poet or writer in turn can deem himself as an instrument or channel for some non-material transcendental force; the writer can sanctify such a force: *Lord Rama (Is said to) gives voice to utterance.*

The *Dream Script*'s definitive achievement is the suspension of relays between past and future, the continuities of lineage. "The aims of poetry cannot be found in the camera", writes Ajanta. "The world as it appears is no reality at all". He even denies a determinable self for the poet: "The one who calls himself a poet must no doubt see the world -

but should never appear in the world as himself" (p. 3). No wonder we do not find any dealings with filiative lineages in Ajanta; nor do we find Arudra kind of anxiety (of influence); we don't find any traces of a desire for becoming torch-bearer here. Even in poems like "Sri Sri" (pp. 61-62) or "Gomata Sakshiga" (p. 57), we do not see any piety associated with invocation of ancestors. For these writers or the past return here transformed. We find that "Ravi Sastry's" is a dance of letters in the shadows of swords, the trotting hoop of whining charger (once again the struggle of sound-bodies). "Sri Sri's" is a magic sound — it animates the inanimate, awakens the lethargic; it incites the wounded: it gives sight to the beheaded. But what we get to hear from this poem ("Sri Sri") is not that magic sound, rather the absence or disappearance of it: "In the meanwhile silence, silence on silence". In other words, "Sri Sri" is an effort to voice shape of silence, to figure silence in sounds. In this effort Sri Sri too is gradually trans-formed, he gets metamorphosed in the innards of the *Dream Script*. Ultimately, is it the figure of "Sri Sri" or "Ajanta"? The question remains undecidable.

The only kind of hard or difficult truth that the *Dream Script* gives us is: to exhibit or represent deathstruggle or death-experience as a thematic object, a material, can only be an irresponsible luxury. There isn't even an iota of risk in such practice. Here, as suggested earlier, language functions as a passive instrument to vehiculate or purvey already objectified theme. It is precisely this complacent relation between the (alleged) message (intention, theme, object, subject) and form that Ajanta's work overturns and displaces. In the *Dream Script* the poet stakes his own body as the site for death-struggle. It is on this very field that he tries to give shape to or figure death-experience. Catastrophe or devastation is not a thematic object, narrative plot here. Devastation here is really the catastrophic form-shifting, trans-forming labyrinth of the *Dream Script* itself — the script that metamorphoses the form of sound-violence.

No wonder the *Dream Script* has no place for narratives with beginning-middle-end: I cannot tolerate sequential effects, writes Ajanta. Indeed, isn't it death that disturbs and devastates all coherences, all comprehensions and lineages of family sagas? Isn't it only an impossible wish to order this "experience" into a coherence? But the interesting thing in the world is that there is only one difficult or hard truth That has a continuous existence: the inescapable fact of death. In the poem "Agni Sparsa", we hear:

*Death is the only truth
In a life moving like a sad sentence
between fear and shock. (p. 7).*

Probably because of this the speaker in the poem "Crooked Line" says at one place: "Friend, can you tell me the secret or death's, life." (p. 32). Only it is the life of death that has a continuous existence.

We encounter these randomly repeated devastations in the *Dream Script*. Ajanta's mode of living, his daily repeated practice is to give form, or figure out those who succumb and are shattered by devastations, effaced and disappeared without trace. These indeterminate figurations, their transformations, the "realities" they suggest, reiterate the coming forth of Ajanta's poetry. Those who reduce Ajanta to a philosopher or *Vedantin* are only flinging labels at him in impatience.

Given that he chooses language as body — more importantly the body that embodies (carries) violence, that enduring self — Ajanta is an incomparable "materialist". Here we are not pasting some school-text definition of "dialectical materialism" on Ajanta. As already argued Ajanta suspends all relays and chains of lineage. He nurtures, cherishes and measures life/death in that language which for him is a body that draws (out) figural shapes.

Ajanta acutely realizes the fundamental materiality of language. In this context one could say that those theories and lives which treat language as an instrument cannot escape the theoretical palaces which regulate them. Even when such theories and their patrons make radical claims — they can still learn about living, enduring struggle from Ajanta's work.

Similarly those who, anxious to escape death, slide into the shelters of "caste" and "community", who valorize national cultural essences can see the courage in the *Dream Script*. In the death-struggle Ajanta did not select any cherished stock brahminical convention. What he has, what he choose to have, is only one thing: the sound-body that he chisels out (of himself). After all, aren't we simply losing those haunting shackles when we struggle with our originary lineages, asks Ajanta. He is prepared to move away from even that most unique and identifiable feature of his personality: his signature: "When I see letters in my signature I have unspeakable fright." (p. 28).

What is important to recognize in Ajanta's poetry is that death is not thematic. The randomness of death occurs in the banality of

everyday existence: hunger, poverty, betrayal, unemployment, communal conflicts, politics. But quite remarkably, Ajanta is painfully aware of the other death as well — the one which Gaddar³ describes as a meaningful death:

*I have seen the stony hands of night's
bodyguards on man's thoughts.*

*I have seen human sacrifice amidst censored letters.
I have seen drawings of the sun-rays on crimson wounds...
All of a sudden, opening of door is death*

*Disappearance of man from the middle of
Road-walk is death... (p. 8).*

I'm watching secret battle in the Medini prison...

*Isn't only after darkness that we get new creation, new world...
In the meanwhile I am renouncing all apparels on my sound-body.*

Even a naked letter is a weapon... (p. 34).

Even death is trans-formed, metamorphosed in the *Dream Script*. Death is not an unchanging transcendental truth here. It is an inescapable physical happening. Only death-struggle gives form to life here; only that engenders the letter-figure. In this struggle thoughts and questions are inextricably woven together. We can show numerous instances of such a weaving in the *Dream Script*:

*Like the gigantic snake entering fire-labyrinth
The unapproachable thoughts have all questions....:*

*Isn't that your question?
Gigantic snakes do not speak. (p. 33).*

Thoughts have no determined ends, they are destiny-less. Only with death do they have filial bond:

*The thought wolves do not haunt anyone tonight.
The tiger called life doesn't frighten now... (p. 11).*

³ "Gaddar" is the legendary composer-singer-performer of the cultural wing of the banned People's War (Naxalite) Group. His songs and performances have captured the entire Andhra Pradesh and several parts of India. Gaddar has written scores of songs and given thousands of performances all over the country over the last twenty five years.

*The thought scattered somewhere, long ago
Will it blossom again?*

*Answer to a question is another question.
In the heart of tiger, I am the man
who throws knives. (p. 20).*

The *Dream Script* is full of interrogations. But every question and the thought circle that provokes it throws into suspension the difference between life and death. It transforms their existing shapes. If life as the tiger, thoughts as snakes and wolves and questions as abysses haunt us, in this dream script we hear death-desiring voices in chorus. In other words, here we cannot decisively separate life from death; we cannot determine their difference unequivocally. Their changings are uncontrollable.

In the "Gallery of Night" the speaker has only one question: "Am I alive?" But here life and death are not opposed categories. Isn't death opening of another door of life, asks the poet. Here even darkness is also, like Ajanta's poetic thought, another enigmatic work. It is a mistake to read the enigmatic darkness of the *Dream Script* from an established perspective; such an approach to complex and enigmatic texts betrays reductionism of any reading. In this context even a talented poet like Tripuraneni Srinivas who collected Ajanta's poems did not seem to be fully aware of Ajanta's double moves. Srinivas chose the stylized portrayal of death on tarot cards for cover picture of the collection.

Birth Pangs

No doubt that devastations of death permeate Ajanta's poems. But death never gets represented here in a monological view, in the received form as evil. We cannot see ravages of death in a univocal perspective; its "value" is not same always. What is distinctive or singular about the *Dream Script* is that it overturns and displaces all the divided opposites such as: good/bad, life/death, conscious/unconscious, darkness/light, empty silences/sound-plenitudes. The cherished patterning of these dualities is thrown into suspension here.

I am walking in the enigmatic narratives of night says Ajanta (p. 36). This line can be cited as an epigraph to the entire collection. As a poem, "Gallery of Night" equivocates the difference between life and death -- in the entire *Dream Script* distance and difference between meaning and absence of meaning keep shifting. Some times we appear

to grasp at the word level, sometimes at the sentence level; on other occasions the poem as a "whole" suggests something. It may be possible to discern meanings at the level of individual words or sentences with the help of either an *Amarakosa* or a *Yaska*, either through Puranic allusions or *itihasic* references. But the lesson of the *Dream Script* that the letters and their formations change their significance the moment they change their place — when they are dis-placed.

Ajanta keeps reminding us repeatedly that this unending metamorphosis, *this* re-citation of life/death is unmistakably played out on/as the body of language.

But what kind of body is this that transforms persistently life from death and death into life? That which destabilises and displaces the values attributed to life (as good) and death (as bad)? Above all, what could be the enigmatic body which is the site of violence and violation, mutilation and wounding — yet a body which is also the site for new birth? Can this be anything other than a woman's body? Indeed, the body that bears and endures violence, that which transforms the value of the couple life-death and circulates thus in the *Dream Script* truly a female body. Whether Ajanta consciously figures language in this way is of less relevance here. The way the dream script confounds the division between life-death, it displaces the boundary between conscious and unconscious similarly. The critical norm which recommends that the critic reflect only the intentions of the writer not only cripples the critical boundaries but contributes to the glorification of the writer as the authoritative figure. But this does not mean that criticism or reading can take fancy-flights. A reading that does not recognize its responsibility cannot be called a reading at all.

Although the *Dream Script* figures the life-death struggle in the sound-body of woman when we observe the actual forms and shapes that float in the work we are struck by an interesting issue. As already remarked the most persistently repeated figure in this collection are decapitated, pointed figures: beheaded trunks, lamp-posts, shattered trees, heads slashed in two, splintered heads, sword dances, killings with swords, amputated hands, columns of vertebral jewelry, *man*, gigantic dark serpents. In the same figure the poet identifies the source of his poetry and thought as splintered head:

*The poetry I write is different
The brook flowing from shattered head.* (p. 13).

The poet yearns for the pure man in the dream waters flowing out of a fractured head — "In dream water, if the pure man appears even for a second — that's enough" (p. 16). All these images of pointed objects and fractured bodies can be described as male sacrificial signs. Moreover, in most of the poems the speaking voice can be identified as male (we probably would have had false notes in his poetry if Ajanta had not done so). In the *Dream Script* these male sacrificial signs metamorphose on language figured as woman's sound-body. But it is not possible to displace the difference and division between these two aspects (language as woman's body and image of male sacrifice). In fact, this difference and division between the field and figure is really a valuable productive contradiction here. It is foolish to reduce this "contradiction" to Ajanta's (biological) male existence. For instance, Gaddar's song-text *Vandanalu* embodies exactly the same problem. But all the figures and elements that Gaddar uses in the song-text are eminently womb-centred. The dominant figural matrix there being the mother's womb and woman's voices.

Ajanta is an honest poet. He does not even attempt in any superficial manner to resolve the contradiction, we have indicated. He does not take up some received "women's problems" either directly or thematically in his poetry. There is no need to defend Ajanta with the silly argument that the term "man" is universally inclusive of woman as well. All the fragmented word-chains in the *Dream Script* emerge from a conception of language fundamentally as woman's body. As demonstrated earlier, the most unequivocal exemplification of this conception of language in Ajanta can be discerned in his practice of weaving linguistic sound-bodies with/into (as) roads. Indeed what are these figures of road, path, bends, turns, furrows, after all? Aren't these the inscriptions of /on woman's body? All the ravages, devastations, sword-severations, dance chaoses, fire-cascades happen only within these inscriptions of woman's body in the *Dream Script*.

It is not fortuitous that for Ajanta a shelter for the life-letters can be found either in the newly born or the streetman. There is a powerful link between the newly born and the streetman in the *Dream Script*: they both are fragmented bodies. As is well-known, the newly born does not have complete control over its organs, nor can it coordinate their movement: the newly-born human is always of "premature" birth. Similarly, the streetman of the *Dream Script* perennially fractured and severed in his death-struggle: this is the daily signature of Ajanta. Also, doesn't the new engender only amidst the life-death struggle?

*Breaking in pain from pain
 In the deluge of sky-earth
 Shaken like the flame in the fist of wind
 Birthing razor-swords
 For the heaven of valiant.⁴*

Ajanta's writing life is moulded in the language figured as woman's body. It is from this that he chisels out his male-sacrificial images and resonances of new-living.

Viewed from a conventional practice of attributing coarse or rugged sounds to (impure) male figures (demons, lower-castes) Ajanta's language-use appears to exhibit male grandeur, masculinity and sovereignty. Viewed from this angle how can one claim that Ajanta's language figures language in woman's body? May be true. But from the very beginning of this analysis we have viewed Ajanta's dream script as a living-struggle. In this struggle Ajanta questions all lineages that regulate us. Isn't the well-known linguistic division (between coarse, rugged - *purusha*- male consonantal and impure versus refined, smooth, civilized, pure and feminine) a part of the heritage? Formalization of poetic diction on the one hand and naturalization of gendered use of language on the other is a part of this classification. The division and opposition between smooth and coarse language bodies is in a way a legitimization of gender differences. (In broaching this issue the point is not that we should remove biological organal differences. The point is to rethink the necessity of interrogating the values of a "moral", "humanistic" heritage emerging from gender differentiation). Even when he spreads around the coarse masculist sound-bodies, Ajanta cannot be said to use them to glorify some male divinity nor to consolidate some male-dominance. As we have seen what these (linguistic) body-chains recount are always about amputated bodies, destroyed dreams, crumbling and ravaged speculations; they tell us about violated bodies and about violent and violating language. What sovereignty can such language erect? What dominance can it valorize and what supremacy can it cherish?

But isn't such a mutilated, violated body, a body which is severed and rented in and with language, isn't such body fundamentally that of a woman? Instead of thematizing such a body in terms of a progressing narrative, fleshed-up as an object in a story, Ajanta's figures show it as a

⁴ Kondepudi Nirmala, "Chavu Bratukula Dwipada", in *Badhasaptanadi*, (Hyderabad, 1995).

changing, ravaged, devastated field or path. Ajanta's practice of such a living overturns the rigidly formalized straitjackets of form-content; it confounds them as an unparalleled activity and it figures shapes of the indeterminable, it letters nightmares.

Whatever might be the intentions of Ajanta as a historical and physical being, whatever theories or language he might take recourse to, the *Dream Script* chisels out and blossoms (only in) language figuring (as) woman's body. Ajanta does not endeavour to unify and name all these sound-organs jetting-forth from such body. After all, aren't naming exercises really anxieties to prove certainties of lineages? How can Ajanta, who erases his own signature, entangle himself in such tussles? We see the explosion of those sound-organs in the *Dream Script* Ajanta does not poke his nose into their provenances and their destinations. His life is to elicit exploding shapes of sound-organs from gun-powder : "No published poem remains with me. I do not allow it to remain. Next moment it must get destroyed before me ... My task is confined to flinging over the world all the poems I write.. Later on I have no use of that poem, whatever may happen to the poem, even if it is blown away in the wind - there is no danger." (p. 4).

Explosion, botanists tell us, is an important factor in processes of spreading seeds. The way in which sound-organs (elements) spring-forth renting open the life of language, exploded sound-bodies, in different forms carve out indeterminate destinations: this is the *Dream Script* indication, this is Ajanta's signature: writing is truly an underground movement (p. 42). For Ajanta the disseminating explosion is important. Unlike the saying in the case of *sutras*, Ajanta does not have the anxiety to conserve the lexical morsels (or sememes) for the preservation and continuity of some paternal lineage. No wonder he prefers the life in which explosion and dissemination are crucial activities. But, fundamentally, what life is it that breaches a violent path in itself, severs itself from itself and pushes forth a fragmented, non-totalized organ-collection? Can it be anything other than a life-death of woman's body?

Then, is Ajanta a feminist? Or is he a champion of violence? May be he is a linguist. Certainly he could be a formalist. Can we insert him into some super-market type of school book of literary history with titles such as "conventions and experiments"? Ajanta smiles from equivocal twilights.

Ajanta's yearning is to give shapes to silences. He longs to figure dream shadows. The *Dream Script* is a struggle to elicit figures from

death which stands at the base of the two realms (silence and dream) and devours word-shades. Moulding forms to what is absent, enduring the painful knowledge of their metamorphosis in form-giving activity, Ajanta's writing is a courageous act. For him this act of writing is etching forms for all those invisible, inaudible, half-understood, partially articulated echoes and voices. Especially those blinking, glimmering vibrations and rhythms which do not seek security of any castles or places sanctified as divine. The only work that is interminable here is that of attempts to address, to vibrate destiny-less silences, and whispering sinking equivocally.

Eventhough the collection the *Dream Script* begins with the theme of sound/vibration and ends with that of colossal silence, these themes cannot be treated as beginning and ends of some developmental narrative; we cannot elicit a chronological sequence. The editor of the collection in avoiding a date-wise arrangement of poems, already implies the impossibility of a sequentiality in Ajanta's work. Yet the choice of the opening and closing poems as moving from *Sabdam* (Sound) to *Mahanishabdam* (Grand Silence), there still seems to lurk a genetic schema in the collection. It suggests a physical or philosophical movement from birth-sounds to death-silences. As I have argued, if at all there is a matrix to these apparently contradicting figurations and forms in Ajanta's poetry it can be described as an effort to give form to a death-struggle. From this angle there is no place for sequentiality in the *Dream Script* (nor even in Ajanta's "thinking"). Every poem in this collection is a variedly repeated attempt at giving a face to the defaced or effaced apparitions and echoes.

Curiously, when we think a little more about this act of Ajanta, we begin to realize that the *Dream Script* has already pulled us (the readers) into its folds. After all we too have all along been responding to this enigmatic dream script. Isn't this effort also an attempt to give shape to what appears to be unformed and equivocal in Ajanta's work? Does it mean that as critics we too are repeating the work in which the poet is engulfed at another level? It may perhaps be true that even literary critical acts too enact a kind of struggle which Ajanta's work embodies. Such a struggle, when pursued with responsibility, can find no final ends, it has no easy destiny; fundamentally it is an interminable reflective meditation and mode of living; the *Dream Script* repeatedly indicates this. Ajanta remains a remarkable poet of contemporary Telugu literary scene who addresses the fundamental concerns of writing and language.

The Moving Messages

Pabitra Sarkar

1. You see them, but do you Notice?

A truck of whatever shape or size, a private bus, a minibus, or what is called an auto-rickshaw (in Bangladesh these are called 'baby taxis') hurtles past you, leaving behind – yes, always a thick cloud of asphyxiating smoke, with you gasping for your life deep inside it, but also leaving behind a faint memory of something inscribed on its hindmost part. It may be a simple, stern warning – 'Danger' – not in this spelling all the time – or a plain single request in a multitude of lexical and linguistic combinations – 'Blow Horn' - '*Aawaaz Karo, Awaz Do, Horn Do, Horn Maaro*' etc., of which the Andhra trucks display an unusually polite version: 'Please Sound Horn Please'. There are several others, much more colourful ones too. The ubiquitous '*Burii Nazarwaaley Teraa Munh Kaalaa*' - 'Ye with evil eyes, you sure have a black face!' is of course always there, on almost 90% of vehicles. But that also is not all. Human imagination stretches as far as infinity and the messages that these vehicles carry are therefore infinitely diverse, although limited, expectedly, by the constraints of space and their own (folk) aesthetical norms. My collection of some six hundred of these samples from the eastern and northern provinces of India shows that they differ strikingly in both scope and depth, as they do so in style and tenor. But there emerge, from the innumerable possibilities they offer, a few patterns of forms, meanings and intentions, which we shall discuss below. All are communications of various kinds, as are the paintings on the sideboards of trucks. Some of these paintings show the mighty Lord Siva, his very virile bull, and his trident with a fearsome snake coiled around it. Or, say, two joyful elephants holding up, with their trunks, two national flags crossing each other and the proud statement 'My India is Great' scripted beneath. Or, as we find in many West Bengal trucks, banal representations of the second Hooghly Bridge–Vidyasagar Setu that is. Equally banal representations of a fierce dinosaur or 'The Titanic' were also popular for some time, which shows the influence of successful films have on these folk-painters, but the Bridge seems to be the perennial favourite in West Bengal. However, paintings like these deserve a separate treatment of their own, and the present author is not

the best person to do it. We therefore give them a go-by here, and concentrate our attention on the communications that are linguistic, which are much more interesting and various, and can be placed into neat categories. These are, one would assume, samples of urban or semi-urban folklore, prompted by the sheer urge for creativity of which Blustein speaks in his 1972 book *The Voice of the Folk*, and also by peoples' intense desire to communicate, if a bit colourfully and 'expressively', with one another. These are however like printed literature, one-way communications, with no reader communicating in return. Those who write them probably write them as decorations of their vehicles, and forget about them once they are written. If one is a stickler for more exact comparison, these are perhaps like graffiti or inscriptions on stone or copperplate, announcements of a sort, with the source of the message missing, or becoming a whole abstract body which is hard to pin down. Though without a definite source, some of them are, however, quite loaded with human emotion. I do not know why the state-run vehicles scrupulously avoid blandishing such messages. The reason probably is that the state is a sombre institution, and has no time to be playful, frivolous or emotional.

2. The Method in Madness

As I mentioned, these messages can be categorized into various groups, on the basis of a number of parameters: the intended receiver of them, the form of the message (prose or poetry), its structure, and what it wants to convey, etc.

In the first of such categories will be, those that are meant for the professional colleagues of the drivers of the vehicle, i.e., messages from one driver to another, who may happen to be driving behind. Some are courtesy announcements: Horn Please, Blow Horn, and their several Indian versions belong to a class which is sported by almost all the trucks and motorized vans, and also by some private buses. *`Jagah Milney Par Paass Diyaa Jaaegaa'* - 'Will let you pass when I find a space on the side'. 'Danger' or its Indian form *`Saabdhaan'* is a succinct, one-word warning, so that the vehicle behind does not move too close for comfort, and its less loaded, but longer versions are '(Please) Keep Safe Distance' and *`Traffic Ain/Niyam Maniya Chalun'* - 'Abide by the traffic rules', which take the form of a request.

This particular statement begins getting a touch of romance in variants like 'Don't Touch Me! No Kiss, Don't Kiss Me! Not so Close, A Little More Distance Please, It is Useless to Follow Me, No More, No

Touch, Thanks Much, Distance Creates Love' etc. *`Aah, Birokto Koro Naa, Chhaacro-to, Bolchhi Tumi Aamaar'* - 'Look, don't vex me. Leave me alone. I have already said you are mine', has a bit of exasperation in the lover's reaction, probably caused by a vehicle's persistence in following another. One also occasionally notices tender importunities like the Bengali *`Tumi Bondhu Durey Thako Aami Choley Jaai'* - 'You stay at a distance my friend, and permit me to go'. A message in the same vein is *`Durey Noy Kaachhey Theko, Chhuyon Naa, Bhaalobeso'* - 'Do not stay at a distance, come close; love me but do not touch.' That reminded me of a sticker I noticed on the back fender of a car in the US in the early seventies: 'Hey, Hey, Not so Close! We Hardly Know Each Other!' The sticker culture is yet to catch wide public imagination in this country, hence, these messages are mostly painted on the vehicles. Another message makes some graphological experiments: *`Eto Kaachhey 9, R Ektu Durey'* - 'Not so close, move at a little distance, Please'. It plays with the Bangla digit for 9, which is read *noy*, and is homonymous with one of most widely used negative words in Bengali. The name of the English letter R is pronounced the same as the Bangla word for 'more', and that has also been cleverly exploited in this message. We will deal with some other such experiments later. Coming back to the messages themselves, here is a matter-of-fact statement: *`Pichhu Dhoro Naa, Kichhu Paabey Naa'* - 'Don't chase me, you'll get nothing.' One also comes across pathetic pleadings like *`Aami Briddho, Aamaakey Mero Naa'* - 'I am old, don't hit me!' or *`Samaajer Sebok Aami, Sebaai Aamaar Dharmo, Aami Ek Amulya Sampad, Aamaay Mero Naa Dhaakkaa'* - 'I am a servant of the society, service is my religion; I am an invaluable asset, (hence) don't hit me from behind'. Such gentle sentiments are thrown overboard by some rude souls, whose threats are clear and distinct: *`Chhunle-y Maarbo'* - 'Touch me, and you'll get a beating,' *`Dhaakkaa Maariyo Naa, Dhaakkaa Maariley Tomaar Maathaa Bhaangbey'*, - 'Don't hit me. If you do, your head will be crushed'. I am intrigued to know why the threat 'A snake will bite you' is also mentioned as a consequence in the same context. Some vehicles warn *`Dhaakkaa Dile-y Kharchaa Nebo'* - 'Hit me and you will have to bear the cost (of repair)'. A Bangla couplet says with some tolerant humour: *`PhulTumi Phutechhiley Jhorey Jaabey Bole, Pichhu Tumi Dhoreychhiley Chenche Jaabey Boley'* - 'Flower, you bloomed just to drop down, you (Sir) were chasing me just to rub against my vehicle.'

Requests to rash drivers take a multitude of forms. From the prosaic 'Abide by the traffic rules' to the telegraphic '*Path, Pathik, Bipad*' - 'Road, Pedestrian, Danger' or '*Ektu Bhul, Maaraatmak Bipad*' - 'A slight mistake, a great danger', and the rhyming '*Juddha Noy Shaanti Chaai, Traffic Aain Maantey Chaai*' - 'We want peace, not war; and we want to follow traffic rules' - are all available. A highly humanitarian '*Jiiyo Aaur Jiiney Do*' (Hindi) - 'Live and let live' is not hard to come by, and the English version is also accommodated, and the alliterative 'Always Alert, Accident Avert' has also found a place. The indirect 'Life is more valuable than time' is noticed both in English and Bangla (*Samayer cheyey Jiboner Daam Beshi*). 'Safe Drive, Save Life' is another ambitious attempt at poetry, both rhyming and alliterative, with dubious success. The following one in Hindi, however, has more poetry to its credit, and displays, in addition, a sound grass-root folk-wisdom: '*Dhiirey Dhiirey Chal Manaa, Dhiirey Sab Kuchh Hoey. Maali Sincheey Shao Ghadaa, Ritu Aawey Phal Hoey*' - 'Easy, my mind, move slowly, because slow is the way of the world. The gardener may water the garden by hundreds of vessels, but it is the season that brings fruits.' I have noticed a Matador resorting to a traditional folk-belief in face of the possible danger lying on roads: '*Maamaa-Bhaagney Jekhaaney, Bipad Nei Sekhaaney*' - 'When the (maternal) uncle and the nephew move together, no danger can touch them'.

3. Jealousy and Superstition

Most of the people involved in the transportation business seem to be a superstitious lot, who always suspect ill will and evil intentions in others of their trade. They apparently are in mortal fear that fellow owners and drivers, or even the sundry pedestrians, are always ready to cast 'evil eyes' on their vehicles. They therefore proceed to protect them by various means, not all of which are graphic or literate. One such non-literate device is to suspend worn-out and thrown away shoes from the fenders, or by painting a fearsome demonic face sticking out its vicious tongue on the central hub of the rear axle, or at the back of the body of the bus. The message is obvious: Look at our vehicle with evil design at your own risk or peril! But it is the graphic communication that is found everywhere: '*Burii Nazarwaaley Teraa Munh Kaalaa*'. It is in Hindi, but being very powerfully potent, the message is written in various regional scripts, often with (unintended) comical results. *Burii* 'Bad' in Hindi often becomes *huri* in Bangla, which is spelt in such a way that it also means 'an old woman'. Another similar request in Hindi is '*Dekho*

Magar Pyaarsey' - 'Look at her but with love' is a more polite version, with no bellicosity intended. A Bangla form turns a little poetical, if also venomous: '*Sunajarer Saathi, Kunajarer Mukhey Laathi*' - 'Friends to benign looks, and a kick on the face that has evil eyes'. '*Kunajarer Mukhey Aagun*' - 'May fire scorch the face with evil eyes' expresses similar sentiments, albeit less poetically. The Hindi '*Jalnawaaley-ko Jaltey Do*' - 'Let them keep burning with envy, (we don't care a fig)' has an indifference of tone, which, however, does not look effortless. I almost jumped in joy when I found a very tolerant message, one almost sodden with the milk of human kindness in a Himachal Pradesh truck which said '*Burii Nazarwaaley, Teraa Bhi Bhaalaa*' - 'You with evil eyes, you be blessed too!'

The *Burii Nazarwaaley* message is often embedded in a rhyming couplet: '*24 kaa Phul, 64 kaa Maalaa, Burii Nazarwaaley Teraa Munh Kaalaa*'. The magical numbers of the first line are nothing but a bifurcation of 2464, which happens to be license number of the vehicle. Another has (Hindi) '*Beli kaa Phul, Chaameli kaa Maalaa, Burii Nazar*'...etc. As everyone knows, '*phul*' and '*maalaa*' are 'flower' and 'garland' respectively, while *Beli* and *Chaameli* are both varieties of the Indian jasmine. '*Dekhneywaaley Dekhtey Rahega, 2937 Chaltey Rahega*' 'Lookers-on will keep on looking (even with evil intentions), but 2937 will be on the road ever.' A Bangla couplet has a more hopeful and less malicious refrain: '*Gaachhti Sobuj, Phulti Laal, 1234 Tumi Chalbey Chirokaal*' - 'The tree is green, the flower red, 1234 you will keep moving for ever'. Another Bangla couplet states with some glee '*Dekhbi ar Jolbi, Luchir Moto Phulbi*' - 'You will keep looking with envy and suffer, and you will (consequently) swell like a *luchi* (a Bengali version of the Indian *puri*, a food item, which swells like a balloon when fried). Another variant is '*Dekhbi ar Jolbi, Neshaa Naa Korey Tolbi*' - 'You will stagger even without drinking'. This Hindi couplet is not very innocent either: '*Chal Re 3158, Chal Merey Bulbul, Jaltey Hai Dushman, Khiltey Hai Phul*' - 'Move on my 3158, move my pet (*Bulbul* is a pet bird which has a melodious whistle); my enemies burning with envy is like flowers blooming around me.'

Hinsaa 'envy' seems to be the primary concern of this community that exercises its members most of the time. '*Hingsaa Koriyo naa*', - 'Don't envy', '*Hingshaa Tyag Korun*', - 'Leave being jealous', '*Tomar Hingsaa Aamaar Jay*' - 'Your envy, my triumph' and '*Tomaar Hingsaa Aamaar Prasaad*' - 'Your envy, is my offering to God' etc. all these in Bangla have a touch of malice, while Hindi '*Jalo Mat, Baraabari Kuro*'

- 'Don't be jealous, try to match what I have done' is more accommodating. There are various similar Bangla assurances: '*Hingsaa Koriyo Naa, Paysaa Jamaao, Tomaaro Habey*', - 'Don't feel envy, save money, you will have one too.' A variant has '*Chestaa Karo*' - 'Try' in place of *Paysaa Jamaao*. Against this not too covert undercurrent of envy and superstitions, when a minibus boldly declares '*Aamaar Shotrui Aamaar Bondhu*' - 'It's my enemy who is my friend', we cannot but admire its noble sentiments. Another, however, is not consoled by such bright suggestion, but laments: '*Shatru Aamaar Aaponjon*' - 'My own people are my enemies'.

There is a milder warning to those who look at the vehicle with some spite. A Bangla caution says '*Dekhley Habey, Kharchaa Aachhe*' - 'What is the use of looking at it, it involves a lot of cost'. I found one with another phrase '*Dekh, Dekh, Sundari Jaachchhey*' - 'Look, look, the beauty moves' prefixed to the above, which asserts that beauty is an expensive *project* and just looking at it will not help any. A similar message may find an expressive folk-metaphor like '*Ek-I Sindur Sabaai Parey, Kapaalguneey Jhilik Maarey*' - 'The same dot of vermilion is worn by all (Hindu married women), but how it will glisten depends on the particular forehead'.

4. Professional Etiquette

Geniality and fellow feeling towards the professional colleagues are not wanting, of course. Hindi '*Phir Milengey*' - 'See you later', Bangla '*Aasi Bondhu*' - 'Bye my friend', '*Aar Noy Ebaar Aasi*' - 'No more (dallying), I'll leave now' compete with 'O.K, Tata' (the last one puns conveniently with the brand-name of many of the vehicles), '*Namaskar, Daadaa Raam Raam*', - 'Welcome, Bye-Bye, Hallo Brother', '*Abhinandan*' - 'Congratulations' etc. The phrase Good Luck is often split into two to accommodate them on the protective flaps of the rear wheels, or on the front fender. '*Aapnaar Jaatraa Shubho Hauk*' - 'Have a safe journey' is also a regular feature. A vehicle often carries several messages at the same time, curiously placing Danger and Welcome side by side, or 'Tata' sandwiched between

5. Messages for All: Patriotism

Now we turn to the messages that are addressed to what can be called the general audience, i.e., not just the professional brethren of the owners or drivers of the vehicles. The first category of such messages can be *broadly* termed the 'Patriotic.' The group that is addressed is

much wider now, it is the national citizenry at large, and consequently what is being said assumes a more general scope.

It was probably in the later years of the eighties when patriotic messages like 'My India is Great' and the Hindi '*Meraa Bhaarat Mahaan*' began to show themselves at the back of the vehicles, with appropriate illustrations of one or more national flags, or, as I mentioned earlier, two elephants sporting them, holding them high with their trunks. I do not know why elephants were selected as particularly patriotic among the animals. To the simplified Western imagination, an elephant represents its ideological construct 'the Orient' or even India, which may have some distant influence on this depiction. But we must focus on the verbal expressions, and they include others like 'I Love India', 'We are All Indians', 'Unity is Our Strength', '*Jai Jawaan, Jai Kissan*' etc. There are, however, discordant deviations. One is quite forthright in its contempt: '*Baap Pareshaan Betaa Sey, Desh Pareshaan Netaa Sey*' - 'The father is undone by the son, while the country is undone by the leader'. An English message admonishes the leaders themselves, who may be elbowing each other for juicy ministerial chairs: Don't Fight! They are Not Musical Chairs. Another patriotic graffiti in Hindi is not unmixed with cynicism: '*Sau Me Aassi Hai Beimaan, Phir-bhi Meraa Bhaarat Mahaan*' - 'Eighty in a hundred are traitors; still my India is great'. This is found in its Bangla version also.

Some, for no apparent reason, state the commonplace: '*Meraa Bhaarat Vishaal*' - 'My India is huge'. Patriotism blends with devotion in '*Yeh Us Deshkii Gaadhi Hai Jis Desh Me Gangaa Bahtii Hai*' - 'This is a vehicle of the country where the Ganges flows'. Cynicism, however, has an overbearing presence, and it takes various forms. The Bangla question '*Swaadhinataa, Tumi Kaar?*', 'Freedom, who do you belong to?' does not sound very innocuous. Patriotism is unalloyed when Bangla inscriptions are found under the national flag: '*Tumi Aamaar, Aami Tomaar*' - 'You're mine, I'm yours'. Iqbal's pronouncement '*Saaraa Jaahaan Sey Aachchaa Hindustan Haamaaraa*' - 'My India is better than all the world' is also there, on many of the vehicles.

A few of these messages are of a localized nature. A bus at Siliguri (North Bengal) proclaims: '*Maayeraa Sabaai Esho, 9 December Taarikhey Shishuder Polio Tikaa Khaaoatey hobey*' - 'Mothers come all, children have go be given oral polio vaccine on 9 December'. Several private buses in Kolkata entreat: '*Esho Padaai, Kichhu Korey Dekhaai*' - 'Come and teach (alphabets in the literacy programme), let's show that we're doing something'. Some also have

the very appealing slogan '*Saakshar Maayer Santaan Nirakshar Thaakey Naa*' - 'No child of a literate mother remains ever illiterate'. Another says, with a pleasing pun - '*Barner Parichay Ghochaabey Barnabhed*' - 'Familiarity with the letters will do away with the distinction of caste'. A Kolkata bus self-confidently proclaims: '*Aamaader Kolkata Sundar*' - 'Our Kolkata is beautiful', while another says '*Sabbar Priyo Kolkata*' - 'Kolkata is everyone's favourite', without caring if others would agree.

Messages recommending birth control for this populous nation are more widely found on the trucks that come from the South. They have a preference for English, and parade pieces like: We Two, Ours is One; One is Best; One Baby, Very Happy etc. Northern intimations are more liberal as far as the allowable number of children is concerned. They prefer two over the one proposed by the South and therefore have '*Ham Do, Hamaaraa Do*' - 'We Two, Ours Two'. There seems to be no national consensus on the ideal number of children a couple must have, hence it shows no sign of stopping to grow. The North often has a very specific reason for recommending restraint, a reason that cannot be called patriotic by any stretch of imagination: '*Bibi Raakho Tip Top, Do-key Baad Full Stop*' - 'Keep your wife in a tip-top shape, put a full stop after the second child'. The Bangla '*Gaachh Baanchaaiyaa Phal Khaaiyo*' - 'Don't kill the tree to eat its fruit' must have a cryptic allusion to the same subject.

Contemporary events also cast their shadow on the patriotic graffiti: '*Kaargil Aamaader*' - 'Kargil is ours', '*Aaposh Noy, Kaargil Chaai*' - 'No compromise, we want Kargil' were seen in Bangla on some vehicles. But the poignant patriotism of 'Save Oil, Save India' seems to have no visible effect on the vehicles themselves. A truck from North displayed this very devoted couplet: '*Jab Tak Chaand Suraj Rahega, Tab Tak Indira Naam Rahega*' - 'As long as the moon and the sun are there, the name of Indira will also be there.'

6. The Owner, the Driver: Tension in Relationship

In relating the tension that reportedly exists between the driver of the car and its owner, humour gets a welcome preference. This is apparent in couplets found both in Bangla and Hindi. Bangla has '*Rupaa Dilaam Syakraakey, Haar Baaniyey Dilo, Gaari Dilaam Driver-key, Paagol Baaniyey Dilo*' - 'Gave silver to the silversmith, and he made a necklace for me; I gave the vehicle to the driver; he made me plum crazy'. Other versions in Bangla and Hindi have gold in place of silver (*Sonaa Diyaa*

Sonaar-ko), or cloth given to a tailor who made a shirt for the owner. But the driver's role remains as frustrating.

The drivers, in their turn, are seldom found directly blaming the owner for any problem they may face from that source. They are however rude on the *chaamchaas* or 'hangers-on' of the owners who they regard with contempt and think no better than pests. A Bangla rebuke runs: '*Khetey Khaao, Chaamchaagiri Koro Naa*' - 'Live by toil, don't be a lackey'. One other says, in chaste diction: '*Chaamchaagiri Koriyo Naa, Chestaa Karo, Tomaar-o Hoibe*' - 'Do not be a lackey. Try and you will also succeed'. Even the much vaunted *Burii Nazar* message has a variant featuring in these despicable figures: '*Maalik-kaa Chaamchaa, Driver-ka Shaalaa, Burii Nazarwaaley Teraa Munh Kaalaa*' - 'The owner's lackey, the driver's brother-in-law, ye with evil eyes...' To the *chaamchaa*, the distinction of being the driver's close kin brings little consolation. One in Hindi carries a bleak threat: '*Maalik-kaa Chaamchaa, Honshiyaar!*' - 'Beware, you lackey of the owner!' Of course the haughty wives and daughters of the owner command as much respect as these parasites. Speaking of the above females, the drivers complain in metaphor 'Green chilly is hotter than the red one'. That the owner has by far the larger share of the collections, has been philosophically stated by a driver: '*Bholaa-baabaa Sahaay, Dash Tikit Maaliker Dui Tikit Aamaar*' - 'Lord Siva is my protector; ten tickets for the owner, two for me.'

Idlers and providers of free and unsolicited advice form another despised community. They are snapped back in Bangla: '*Nijer Charkaay Tel Din*' - 'Oil your own machine' or 'Mind your own business', as we found on an auto-rickshaw. Another auto thunders, also in Bangla, '*Jnan Deben Naa. Kichhu Korey Dekhaan*' - 'Please do not pontificate. Do something and prove your own worth.' '*Kathaa Kam, Kaaj Beshi*' - 'Less speech, more work', or '*Kathin Parishramar Bikalpa Nei*' - 'There is no alternative to hard work' are reminiscent of the dreaded Emergency of the seventies, but are popular with some vehicles. Another Bangla dictum, '*Parishram Beimaani Karey-Naa*' - 'Hard work never betrays' is probably intended for the same hated lot, i.e., the *chaamchaas*.

7. Focus on the Drivers' Life: Looking at Themselves

Inscriptions on the drivers' own lives have a touch of sadness about them. Some of them may begin with a joyful '*Chal Baasanti Howrah Maidaan*' - 'Let's move Basanti (as the vehicle is fondly called,

following the practice of a Mumbai film hero in a particular film), it is the trip to Howrah Maidan now'.

There are several others which show some jest of life: '*Ek Phul Do Maali, Park Circus-ey Load, Howraay Khaali*' - 'Flower one, gardeners two; loaded at Park Circus, unloaded at Howrah'. Those who drive long distance, often across the length and breadth of the country know however very well that theirs' is a life of little comfort and a lot of hard work. So one message says in Hindi '*Naa Milaa Hai, Naa Milegaa Aaraam Kahin, Meri Safar Subah Kahin, Shaam Kahin*' - 'I haven't got any respite yet, nor I'm going to have it anywhere: I have to move from dawn to dusk'. Indeed, short messages like '*Paapaa, Jaldi Aanaa*' - 'Come back soon, Daddy', suggest what the driver is to live and plug for, and his life on the road is anything but certain. Still, they have to go on doing this because '*Paapii Pet-ka Sawaal Hai*' - 'It's a question of the accursed belly (which has to be filled)'. Hence he says in another of the numerous couplets that are present: '*Rahaa Chaman To Phul Khilengey, Zindaa Rahaa To Phir Milengey*' - 'If there's spring, flowers will bloom, if I am alive, I shall see you again'. The driver has '*Hath Mey Chaakki, Pair Taley Killi, Din Mey Mumbai, Rat-ko Delhi*' - 'The steering in hand, accelerator under the feet, Mumbai by the day, Delhi by the night'. Another driver rues '*Karam Phutaa Kismat Tutaa, Sikhaa Daibhari Kaam, Gali Gali Sey Hokar Aayaa, Maalik-kaa Badnaam*' - 'My fate has gone bust, my fortune broken, hence I had to learn how to drive. I have to travel from alley to alley, but what I receive is the owner's abuses'. An auto-rickshaw in Kolkata declares '*Aamaader Anek Samasyaa*' 'We have many problems', although another boasts that his small vehicle was '*Madhyabitter Maruti*' - 'The Maruti of the middle-class'. One also notices an underlying self-respect and assurance the driver carries about his skill, found both in Hindi and Bangla: '*Aasmaan Kaa Taaraa Koi Gin Nahi Saktaa, Kismat-ki Rotii Koi Chhin Nahi Saktaa*' - 'None can count the stars of the sky, nobody can deprive you of the bread that your fate has in store for you.' The Bangla is almost a word-for-word translation: '*Aakaasher Taaraa Keu Guney Dite Paarey Naa, Bhaagyer Ruti Keu Kerey Nitey Paarey Naa*'.

The driver's fondness for and pride in his vehicle are feelings that are quite manifest in many communications. '*Maalik-kaa Daulat, Driver-ka Pasinaa, Chaltii Hai Road Par, Muhabbat-ka Haasinaa*' - 'The owner's wealth and the driver's sweat, it's this beloved beauty that moves on the road'. A Matador declares with aplomb: Six Wheels, Stepney Fresh, My Car Moves Like the Rajdhani Express. A common

Bangla protestation is *`Gaari Kebol Gaari Noy Go, Bhaalobaasaar Phul, Gaaritey Uthiyaa Paysaa Ditey Koro Na-go Bhul'* - 'The car is not just a car, it is the flower of love; (hence) don't forget to pay when you enter it for a ride'. A Matador replaces the second part of the couplet with this direction: *`Alpo Korey Bojhaai Karo, Jaabey Anek Dur'* - 'Load lightly, so that it can go a much longer distance'. There are however many nasty fellows who find it extremely painful to pay. For them there is this nugget of folk-wisdom: *`Kathaataa Money Rekho Sonaa, Jal Baady Sab Kenaa'* - 'Remember it, my pet; you have to buy everything except water.'

8. The Driver: Theme of Love

Love and romance are favourite themes in many such communications, which probably compensate a little for a life of drudgery and long separation from one's near and dear ones. Here are some of the best and choicest of folk-poetry that deal with the sentiment, all in Hindi: *`Chaandnii Chaand-sey Hotaa Hai, Sitaaron-sey Nehin; Muhabbat Ek-sey Hotaa Hai, Haazaaron-sey Nehin'* - 'For moonlight you go to the moon alone, and not to the stars; for love, you find just one, not a thousand'. *`Phul Khiltey Hai, Gaadimen Uthtii Kiun Nehin, Driver-ko Pyaar Kartii Hain, Baataatii Kiun Nehin'* - 'You flower in bloom, why don't you come up on my car; why don't you say if you love this driver?' *`Chaand Chhup Gayii, Chaandnii Sharmaa Gaii; Kismat-mey Thii Sawaarii, Merii Gaadi-mey Aa Gayii'* - 'The moon has hidden itself, moonshine has become bashful; the passenger who I was fated to meet, has just stepped onto my vehicle'. *`Dil Ek Mandir Hai, Jismey Tum Murat Ho; Khudaa-key Kasam, Tum Bari Khubsurat Ho'* - 'My heart is a temple in which you reside as the idol; by God I declare that you are very beautiful.' *`Gaadi Chaalaataa Rozii-key Waastey; Aankhon-mey Aansu Aa Gayii Aapsey Milney-ke Waastey'* - 'I drive my car for my livelihood; my eyes are filled with tears, longing to be with you.'

There are quite a few in Bangla also: *Baagaaner Jharaa Phul, Aakaasher Taaraa; Aami ki Thaaktey Paari Tomaakey Chhaaraa?* — 'Fallen flowers of the garden, stars of the sky; how can I live without you?' *Mukher Bhaalobaasaa, Pather Parichay, Chiradin-I Ray* — 'Love that is expressed, familiarity struck on road, stay with one for ever'. *Shishirey Ki Dhaan Hoy, Jal Naa Holey; Dur Thekey Ki Prem hay, Kaachhey Naa Eley?* — 'The dewdrops cannot lead to a crop of paddy, there must be rainwater; so love cannot grow from afar, you must come

close.' Another, not much of a poem, runs like this: *Golaap Phul Tultey Giye Haatey Phutlo Kaantaa; Tomaar Kathaa Bhaabtey Giye Money Jaaglo Byaathaa* — 'I plucked a rose and pricked my finger; I thought about you and pain arose in my heart.' Several of them contain a sad note, for example in Bangla: *Phul Tumi Phutechhiley Jhory Jaabey Boley; Bhaalo Tumi Besechhiley Chherey Jaabey Boley* — 'Flower, you blossomed only to drop on the ground; you gave me your love just to leave me later.' Another in Hindi is rather good: *Phul Khiltey Hai, Phir Bikhar Jaatey hai, Sab Kho Jaatey hai, Dard Jam Jaatey hai* — 'Flower blooms, and then it dries up; everything is eventually lost, but pain goes on growing.' Non-rhyming messages are found in all languages, conveying a multitude of moods and situations: Love Is A Sweet Poison, *Kyaa Hun Khush Hain?* — 'Well, are you happy?' *Thaahro, Ham Aa Rahey Hai* — 'Wait, I'm just coming back.' The announcement in Hindi which says *Meraa Pardeshi Naa Aayaa* — 'My stranger didn't come back', has an accompanying picture of a maiden sitting with her head rested on one of her knees. Bangla *Dekhaa Holey Boley Diyo* — 'Tell her if you meet her', *Bhuley Thaakaa Bhaalo, Kintu Bhuley Thaakaa Ki Jaay?* — 'It is fine if one can forget, but is it ever possible to live without remembering?' *Tumi Bhaalo Thaakley Aami Bhaalo* — 'If you are well, I will be alright too.' This one is rather desperate: *Dekhley Paagol Hoyey Jaabo* — 'I shall turn crazy if I look at you!' One other has a rather maudlin message: *Ek Dekhaatey Mon Bharey Naa, Mon Jey Kemon Karey Aamaar, Pathey Daanriyey Theko, Dekhaa Habey* — 'There's no satisfaction in just one glimpse, and my mind is restless. Wait by the roadside, so that I can meet you.' Another Bangla couplet is realistic, yet hopeful, and resorts to code mixing, using both English and Bangla lexical items: Love Is *Chhalanaa* (deception), *Heppy* (sic) *Habo Dujonaa* ('we two will be happy'), It Is My *kaamonaa* (desire). One uses metaphors of love to address, arguably, a not too prosaic commuter: *Shit Aar Kuyaashaay Phasal Ki Phaley? Gaari Charaa Jaay Ki Kaachhetey Naa Eley?* — 'Do you get any crop in winter and fog? Can you ride the vehicle if you don't come close to it?'

Snatches of popular songs, both film and non-film, are widely used in such graffiti as they mostly cater to the theme of love. '*Tumi Sundar Taai Cheyey Thaaki Priya, Se Ki Mor Aparadh*' - 'You are beautiful, that's what makes me keep looking at you. Is that my crime?' '*Ek Palaker Ektu Dekhaa*' - 'Just a moment's glimpse', '*Ek Cup Chaayey Aami Tomaakey Chaai*' - 'I want you in a cup of tea' are some Bangla examples, while the following are in Hindi: '*Dekh Sakhi Saajan*

Jaa Rahaa Hai - 'Look, friend, my beloved is going', *Saajan Chaley Pardesh* 'My beloved is leaving for another land', *Dhundhtey Rah Jaayengey Yaar Haamaarey Jaysaa* - 'I shall keep looking for you as one looks for a friend.' Names of popular films do also find a place on these vehicles: *Ham Aapkey Hai Kaun? Ekanta Aapon* - 'Your intimately', *Ham Hai Raahi Pyaar Kii* - 'We are love-travellers' etc.

9. Resignation

A great many of these runaway messages are, in a way, philosophical, and suggest a resignation, which is usually associated with the kind of life the drivers have to live. Or, it may be the typical Indian dependence on fate. So when one finds pieces like Bangla *Sukh Swapaney*, *Shaanti Shmashaaney* - 'You can find happiness only in dream, peace only at the cremation place', one stops short of being amused at such philosophy. *Jakhan Janma Hoyechhey, Mrityu Habey-I, Chintaa Korey Ki Laabh?* - 'Once you are born you are sure to die; what is the use in worrying?' is another useful advice which seems to be heartily received, given their penchant for rash driving. Some say *Manusher Cheyey Chhaagoler Daam Beshi* - 'Goats are worthier than men', while some remind in Hindi, *Socho Saath Keyaa Jaayega* - 'Just think what you can take with you (when you leave this world)'. *Nasib Aapnaa Aapnaa* - 'Everyone to his own fate' is another such philosophical statement. Some with experience say, *Aagey Anek Bhaalo Chhilo* - 'Things were much better before' or *Kichhui Aar Aager Moto Nei* - 'Nothing has the quality of earlier times', although one also comes across such declarations as *Aager Thekey Bhaalo Hoyechhi* - 'I have changed for the better'. Bengalis often bring personal experiences to the theme: *Baaritey Piraa, Baasey Taara* - 'Someone sick at home, but people in the bus say "Faster"'. Some empathize with the diesel oil and writes, *Aami Diesel Bolchhi, Janma Theke-I Jwolchhi* - 'This is me, Diesel speaking; I am burning from my very birth.' Even the vehicle is made to say *Janma Theke-I Cholchhi* - 'I am running since I was born'. Some trucks are found to declare: *Jiboner Anektaa Path Ekaa-i Choley Esechhi* - 'I have covered a long way of my life, all alone.' Some say, *Path-I Jibon* - 'Road is life. 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' should more appropriately belong to the love theme, although it is not out of place in this section. *Ei Prithibi Jemon Aachhey Temoni Rabey, Ei Sundor Prithibi Cherey Choley Jetey Habey* - 'The world will remain as it is now; only I have to leave it (when the time comes).' This inevitable eventuality probably compels some of them to say *Manush*

Aapon, Taakaa Par, Taakaa Chherey Maanush Dhar - 'Man is your own, not money; hence grab man as much as you can, not money.' *'Aashaa Hi Jiban Hai'* - 'Hope is life' is often embossed with confidence. Smart-alecks are discouraged by this caution: *'Janma Thekei Chaalaaki, Parey Bujhbi Jwaalaa Ki'* - 'Too smart for your good from the very birth; you will have to suffer later.' A somewhat theatrically inclined message says, 'Life is a Stage, Man Actor, God Director'. Statements like *'Ekdin Pratidin'*, 'One day, every day', although borrowed from the title of a Bangla film, underscore the prevailing mood of the community. One or two however try to maintain a brave front, citing a Bangla adage: *'Saagorey Petechhi Shajjaa Shishirey Ki Bhay?'* - 'I have laid my bed in the ocean, so why should I be worried about dewdrops?' An owner sentimentally reflects: *'Jata Aay Tata Byay; Bhay Paai Mamataay'* - 'I have to spend all I earn; I am weary of my softness (for the vehicle)'.

10. Submission

Resignation about life should naturally lead to a submission to a supreme power which people think controls their lives. You notice hundreds of *Jai Maataa Di*'s on the trucks of Delhi, Hariyana and Himachal Pradesh, referring to the usual salutation people offer to Bishno Devi, while the other mother, Kali that is, is more popular with the trucks of the eastern region. *'Maayer Aashirbaad'* - 'Blessing of the Mother' adorns a large number of vehicles, although some pose this critical question: *'Orey Paagol, Maa Ki Tor Ekaar?'* - 'You crazy fellow, do you think the Mother is yours alone?' It also has a 'secular' version, replacing Maa with *Raastaa* 'Road'. Another utters a very mundane prayer and would have none of the spiritual nonsense: *'Maa, Hoy Dekha Dey, Naa Hoy Du-Taakaa Bastaa Chaal Dey'* - 'Either appear before me, Mother, or let me have rice two rupees a sack.' A couplet runs: *'Jai Maa Taaraa Bol, Tobey Darjaa Khol'* - 'First proclaim the glory of Kali, and then unlock the door (of the car)'.

The Mother's consort, Lord Siva, is not forgotten either. *'Bholey Baabaa Paar Karega'* - 'Siva the forgetful will take me across', *'Om Namah Shivaayah'*, - 'Salute to Siva', *'Ek Shankar Teraa Sahaara'* - 'Only Siva is your protector' are widely distributed. Vaishnavism also claims its rightful place in *Hari Om* and Bangla *'Krishna Balo, Sangey Chalo'* - 'Say Krishna and off we go!' Ganesha is not forgotten either, as *Shri Shri Siddhidaataa Namah*, whatever the quality of Sanskrit, decorates the top front of many vehicles. Apart from these sectarian

deities, the all powerful, one and undefined God also has His votaries, who advise: *'Ishwar Par Bharosaa Raakho'* - 'Trust in God', *'Ishwar, Jaatraa Saphal Karo'* - 'God, make the trip a success', *'Sabkaa Maalik Ek Hai'* - 'There is only one God for everyone' etc. It is probably Tulsidas who is remembered in the couplets: *'Naatha Hey Sakala Sampadaa Tuhaari; Maataa Pitaa Suta Mita Naari'* - 'Lord of mine, all my assets: my mother, father, sons, friends and wife, are yours' and *'Prabeshi Nagar Kijey Sab Kaajaa; Hridayey Raakhi Kaushalpura Raajaa'* - 'I enter the city and do all I have to do; but I keep Rama inside my heart.' An entry in Hindi commands: *'Bandegii Bhagawaansey Karo, Mujhsey Nehin, Dosti Mujhsey Karo, Dhandheysey Nehin'* - 'Bow your head before God, not before me; make friends with me, not with selfish designs.' A Bangla piece of poetry prays: *'Duhkha Jadi Daaao Prabhu, Morey Shakti Diyo Sahibaarey'* - 'If you must give me pain, please also give me the power to bear it', while *'Ishwar Sarbashaktimaan'* - 'God is omnipotent' is the simple assurance that many vehicles prefer to carry.

11. Miscellany

Many of the communications must also defy neat categorization. These lines of endearment in Bangla for example: *'Tumi Samudra, Aami Dheu, Tumi kuttaa, Aami Gheu'* - 'You are the ocean, I am a wave; you are the dog, I am your barking' stands ambiguously located between God and a beloved as the intended addressee. Not very high poetry perhaps, but it has an unusual clarity in its use of metaphors. Many trucks in West Bengal carry the statement *'Aapnaar Byabahaar Aapnaar Parichay'* - 'You are identified by your conduct with others', which is more pithily express in another couplet; *'Shikshaa Aachhey Byabahaar Nai; Sei Shikshaar Mukhey Chhaai'* - 'Has a degree, but no polite manners; such a degree be damned!' *Satyer Jai* (Bangla) and Sanskrit *Satyameva Jayatey* both utter the same conviction 'Truth will triumph', in spite of the ground reality of the world. *'Ekdiner Duhkha Bhaalo, Kintu Chirodiner Duhkha Bhaalo Noy'* - 'Sorrow for a day is all right, but sorrow for ever is not so good' has its supporters. Another in Hindi appears to be a poem of love, but the latter part destroys the illusion: *'Mayney Unkey Yaad men Zindagii Guzar Diye; Magar Wah Nehin Aayey Jinhey Udhaar Diye'* - 'I waited all my life yearning for this person, but he, whom I lent money, did not ever turn up!' An English message brightly commands: 'Smile All the Time', while another says rather coyly, 'You Look Sweet When You Smile'. A rickshaw at

Burdwan was seen to state with humility, *'Raastey Men Chalo Haastey Haastey; Jaatriyon-ko Bolo Namastey Namastey'* - 'Move on the road with a smile; address all the passengers with a salutation'. One hopes that this noble message will spread like wildfire among others of the transportation trade.

If an auto sports a line from a popular Bangla song *'Ghum Peyechhey, Baari Jaa'* - 'Feeling sleepy, head for home', another snaps back *'Ghum Peyechhey, Lajjaa Karey-na?'* - 'Sleepy, you said? Aren't you ashamed?' One minibus offers this unsolicited advice *'Chhele-ra Meyeder Thekey Saabdhaan'* - 'Boys beware of girls', for takers who may have any use for it. Some complain *'Aami Sakalkey Dekhlaam, Aamaakey Keu Dekhlo Na'* - 'I cared for everyone, but nobody cared for me'. One is found to ask *'Kothaay Kashto?'* - 'Where exactly is the pain?'

Pious sentiments and values are proudly proclaimed: *'Work Is Life, World Is Life'*. Nor is there any dearth of those that say *'Honesty Is The Best Policy'*. Another instance of code switching is *'Dekh Bhaai Dekh'*, Sorry Wrong Number, the meaning of which cannot be lost on girl-watchers. A Tempo carries the assurance of a guru: *'Bhay Ki Rey Paagol, Aami To Aachhi'* - 'Why fear, you silly, am I not with you?' A minibus advertises: Love For Sale, 100% Discount. The minibuses in fact are chummier than others and tell you, 'We're Friends or Let Us Make Friendship'. Another tells you to have this noble resolution: *'Sukhey Duhkhey Aparer Lagi Jeno Ei Jiban Jaapon Kori'* - 'Let it be so that I live my life for others, through sunshine and rain.' A touching instance of filial fondness is found in a message in which the nephew takes leave of his uncle: *'Kaakaa Aashi, Bhaaipo'*. One minibus has this wisdom for all of us to consider: *'Buddhikey Mohamukta O Satarka Karaar Jonyo Pradhaan Prayojon Bijnaancharchaar'* - 'Study of science is a must for making your understanding alert and unbiased'. A Matador candidly admitted: *'Punji Kam, Bujhi Kam'* - 'I have scanty means and little intelligence,' although another may say, *'Sabaai Bhaalo, Aami-i Khaaraap'* - 'Everyone is good except myself'. *'Orey Paagol, Kothaay Daao Maathaa Aar Kothaay Daao Mon'* - 'You crazy, where is your mind and where is your attention?' is intriguing, as it is hard to decide whom is it addressed to.

12. The Final Words

Spelling is not a very strong point of these expressive dispatches. One can find beauties like: Work More, Talk Lace, Keep Sepe Distance, Wet

For Side or Wait For Site, Horren Pleas (the last is noticed on many Punjab trucks). '*Dengar*' is a common sight, and a juicy example is '*Time and Tyde Wate for None*'. Yet they explore various possibilities of multimedia communication. For '*Burii Nazar*', they draw quite benign looking eyes and faces replacing words for them. This Hindi admonition is so popular that it is written in almost all Indian scripts. Often they replace words by homonymous digits, of English, Bengali or Hindi, as in Hindi '*13 Meraa 7*', which reads '*Teraa Meraa Saath*'.

However crude or comical these messages (not all of them are either) may be, we are still grateful that they are there. What is important is the desire of the owners/drivers of the vehicles, who, beyond the common greetings like '*Welcome*', '*Tata*', '*Shubh Jaatraa*' - '*Happy journey*', etc., feel that they still have something more to communicate, intimately if not aesthetically, i.e., by the norms of the so-called high art. They do not want to address their professional colleagues alone, but also the general public at large. This is 'literature' in the basic sense of the term, since it mostly uses literate means. It is also *Sanity* of sorts, since they want to relate to others through these messages. Whatever the quality of these graffiti, they make our general environment slightly more interesting, as machines are given a human touch and made carriers of human messages, notwithstanding, of course, the smoke filled with carbon monoxide that may come with them.

Author's Note: I have followed the pedestrian way of transliterating material from Indian Languages. The objective was to give a rough idea of how it is pronounced. This may not satisfy the finicky phonetician.

Space and Cosmology of Jenu Kurubas

Kikkeri Narayan

Introduction

The Jenu Kuruba Tribal Community

The Jenu Kuruba tribals inhabit the forest area that forms a conclave of the 3 states : Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This forest covering an area of 2000 sq. kms. is home not only to the Jenu Kurubas, but also to other tribes like the Betta Kurubas, Soligas, Yeravas and Paniyars.

However, the Jenu Kuruba tribe is distinct in its appearance and cultural practices. The Jenu Kurubas have Negroid features. They are of short stature, have curly hair and are generally dark complexioned. They are shy and timid by nature.

The Jenu Kurubas have several versions regarding their origin. One version is that, when the world was inundated, and completely destroyed, a vegetable called the “burude” (bitter gourd) managed to stay afloat. This vegetable finally settled on a piece of earth. From this “burude” sprung a man and a woman who were brother and sister. They perpetrated the Jenu Kuruba tribe.

The second version is centered round their belief that the world was created within 40 days. There was a male Kont and a femal Kont [the God of this tribe] who took a handful of mud, and from each fistful, created a man and a woman. They were the first of the Jenu Kurubas. The tribe believes that they were born in early summer.

The Jenu Kurubas derive the name from their occupation. They are traditionally, ‘honey gatherers’. Jenu means ‘honey’ and ‘Kuruba’ means ‘tribe’. These people roam the forests in search of honey, edible tubers, fruits etc. History has it that the Jenu Kurubas used to supply elephants, to the Chola and the Pallava Kings. More recently, (1972) the Jenu Kurubas played a major role in the famous ‘Khedda’ operations, helping to catch and train wild elephants, they have proved to be exceptionally skilled mahouts, they are well versed with the flora and fauna of the forests. Kenneth Anderson (1930) an Englishman who lived in India, mentions in one of his books, a tribal young man who helped him track down a man-eating tiger in the Kakanakote forests. Verrier Elwin met the Jenu Kuruba tribals when he traveled around Malabar region.

O.P. Jaggi (1984) also wrote about the Jenu Kuruba tribe mentioning their power as sorcerers. He said:

The Todas dread the sorcery of the Kurumbas more than that of their own sorcerers. They believe that the sorcery of the Kurumbas is much more dangerous and cannot be remedied. If it is found that a Kurumba has made a man ill, the only thing to be done is to kill the Kurumba. The belief in the magical powers of the Kurumbas probably arose from the fact that the slopes of the hills on which the Kurumbas lived were extremely malarious and it often happened that a visit to a Kurumba village was followed by an attack of fever of a severe kind.

(Such instances are also cited in Krishna Alanahalli's novel *Kaadu* and M.S. Puttanna's novel *Madiddunnomaaraya*).

All along, only the term 'Kurumba' was mentioned, referring in general to the tribes in the region. But it was Masti Venkatesh Iyengar who during his term as Assistant Commissioner in 1928, distinguished for the first time, the different tribes living in the region.

Space and Cosmology

Jenu Kuruba - Topology

A typical Jenu Kuruba settlement is a cluster of ten to fifteen huts surrounded by hillocks inside the forest. The settlement is constructed in an elliptical shape. Entry and exit space is marked breadthwise, which forms a Central line and divides the whole premises into two parts as an egg is cut vertically into two. The *centre-space* is a *fire-pit* which plays a vital role in the happenings of the community.

Boundaries in Space

The huts are rectangular in shape, built by bamboo slits. The wall is finished with supplementary packing and mud plastering from outside upto two to three feet. The height of the wall is about 5 to 10 feet, the breadth is about 8 feet and it is in the form of a rectangle. A slant roof is constructed and covered by *Āne Hullu*, the elephant grass. The hut is divided by bamboo curtain to mark the kitchen. The door of the hut is very small and one has to creep to enter in. *The space within the hut is conceptually organised by the inmates*: The space outside the kitchen is divided into *head-zone (tale kade)* and *foot-zone (kalkade)*. The head-zone is a portion of *floor space* adjacent to the wall opposite the door way. The *door way space* works out as a dining hall. The sitting

arrangement is in a circular way. But the husband sits towards head-zone. The other members of the family are seated according to their age. Husband and wife during the presence of grown up children do not sit in the hall together. The wife sits inside the kitchen. During night the hall is a *sleeping space* for the husband, wife and young babies. The grown ups sleep outside the hut near the fire pit. During the day, when the mats are rolled, it is just a *bar-space*; physically indistinguishable, but conceptually distinct.

Hearth occupies a central position in the kitchen; the utensils and pots are kept around the hearth. *Vertical space* like a bamboo pillar, is used to hang the food materials kept in *bamboo mugs* that are usually hung to the bamboo pillar. The kitchen is always towards the right side of the hut, howsoever less the space and things that are kept in the hut, it has hierarchial structures. These structures are followed by the members.

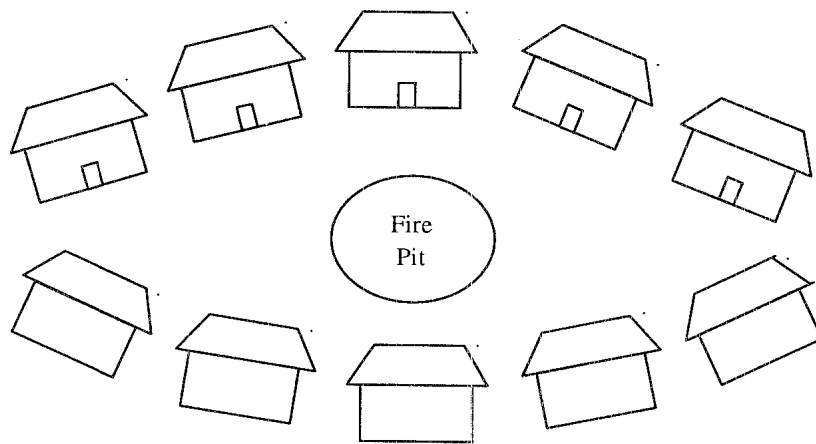


Fig. 1

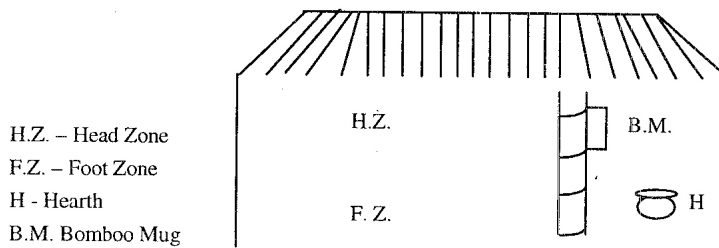


Fig. 2

Etiquette of Entrance:

• *Insider and Outsider*

The concept of *Insider* and *Outsider* operates strictly in any of the Jenu Kuruba families. The Insider in a Jenu Kuruba hut consists of the husband, wife, unmarried sons and daughters. Married sons and daughters establish their own huts and thus become *outsiders*. A married daughter is not allowed to enter the hut and use the utensils like plates; she is fed on leaves. A married son can enter upto the *foot-zone* only and that too in the presence of the inmates of the hut. The daughter-in-law can also enter the hut upto the *foot-zone*, only when her shout is responded to by the family members, and even that in the absence of her father-in-law.

• *Member of the settlement but not a kinsman.*

There are no formal invitations as such to invite any member of the same settlement irrespective of age, sex and relationship. The etiquette is different from that of close kinsman. However, if any one, either male or female, has to exchange words, he or she can come near the hut and shout for him or her using relevant social kinship term, but cannot enter the hut. *The social distance or social space between the insider and the outsider, within the kins, and the people of the settlement is maintained.* After shouting, if the person is a male he goes near the fire pit at the centre of the settlement and sits waiting for the addressed. The person shouted for, i.e., the addressed, comes near the fire pit and the conversation takes place.

• *Insider (to the settlement) and outsider (to the settlement but of the same Ethnic group)*

A person who belongs to the same ethnic group, but is an outsider to the settlement, has to adopt certain strategies to enter the settlement. He may pass around the settlement behind the huts, but he has to maintain a *shouting distance*, or *visible distance*, and has to sight one of the settlements. He can send word through such a person to the one he intends to meet. Until the intended person comes he has to remain outside the settlement. Then he is asked to come near the fire pit, and have a discussion. But, the *outsider* cannot plunge into discussion directly. He talks to the person by offering him a bit of *honey*, tapioca or *beedi*. Meanwhile, he indirectly instigates the other person and thus bridges the *psychological space* between the two.

The outsider, though belonging to the same ethnic group, does not take cooked food. He is supposed to leave the settlement before the sunset. If there are natural obstructions like rain or if there are signs of wild elephants around the settlement, the outsider can stay in a separate hut constructed for guests. The visitors' hut is similar in its construction to the dwelling hut, but is smaller in dimension. This is constructed behind the dwelling huts (see fig. 2).

- *Insider (to the settlement) – Outsider (to the ethnic group)*

An outsider, who does not belong to this tribal community is not supposed to enter the settlement. He has to stand on the hillock and shout for the person, usually the head-man. It is only the head-man who talks to the outsider standing on the top of the hillock.

- *Hut – Fire Pit*

The fire pit is a central place of the settlement and people take care of the fire so that it burns always. The fire pit is a general place where all the people sit around during evening time. It always serves as a meeting place for the elders. The head-man can shout for people to gather around the fire pit, and hence form the *shouting distance* as well. This is the place where people of the settlement sit around to decide, especially the duties and work to be done on the next day. The distribution of the raw materials gathered during the day is also done here. The fire pit is also a place where the grown up boys bake and distribute tapioca, rats or whatever raw material they procure jointly in a group from the forest. This is the sleeping place for unmarried boys and girls.

- *Fire pit litigation*

The space around the fire pit gets converted into a *place of litigation* and thus serves as a court. Though the sitting arrangement is in a circle around the fire pit, the accused and the accuser sit within the circle squatting. They face the head man, but they are not supposed to face each other and any of the audience during the inquiry. Thus they form a triangular space within the circle. The direct visibility of the accused and the accuser and *speaking distance* is maintained between them. Even though there is no elevated space created for the head-man he becomes an important person in the process of litigation. Accused-accuser-audience/witness who are in the circle should directly address the head man. The accused and the accuser are not supposed to talk to other people directly and reply or question, queries should be through the head-man. If the litigation is

between two male members, women are not supposed to participate but if it is between men and women or between women, the female folk can take part.

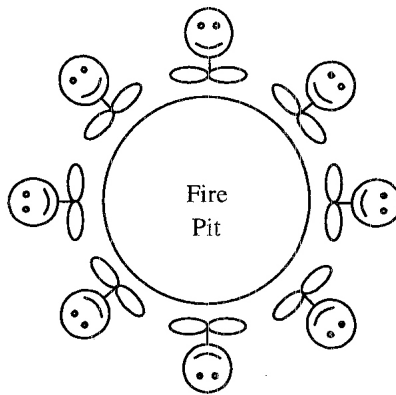


Fig 3

Orientation Space

Orientation space is usually connected with the natural geographical qualities. Since the settlements are within the thick forest and there are no other means of transportation, or clear road or path, the narrow pathfinder leads upto top of the hillock and dissolves into the forest. There are no lexical items even to indicate directions. But the concept of orientation works out in a different way. The settlement works out as a center for them. From the center they may move in any direction depending on their decision taken the earlier day. The approximate distance from the center inside the forest may be upto ten kilometer radius. This boundary may be considered as a circle. They move from the center of the circle and after finishing their work they move back to the center.

- *Direction of wind as orientation:*

The direction of wind is very important for Jenu Kurubas when they move inside the forest. They have to be very careful while they are engaged in their work, because wild animals like elephants, tigers and bears may attack them from any direction, especially elephants, that are very sensitive to human smell. Usually people move in groups; but when they are scattered for collection of food they may be alone within the shouting distance. Their ears are very sensitive

to the sounds of the movements of elephants; by seeing the elephant dung and urine they can make out at what time an elephant has crossed the spot; and by watching carefully the destroyed shrubs and the barks and branches of trees, they can trace the direction of the movement and avoid that direction. They have to be extra careful when they face rogue elephant : the man who sees or notices such elephant moves in such a way that the wind does not carry his smell to the elephant. Most often they are chased by the elephants, in such situation they climb trees very fast until they reach safe height. This act of escaping from elephants is called *gali tappisodu* (avoiding wind).

After climbing the tree, the man shouts *kuu*. This sound is an indication of danger and the other people take care of themselves by climbing up the tree. If they are within the *visible distance* they make non verbal signs.

If the elephants are in a herd, these people move towards left. They have found out through experience the sight of the left eye of an elephant is short. At the same time, they know that the power of visibility of an elephant is less when compared to other animals.

- *Colour and Distance:*

They know that certain colours attract the wild animals easily. For example, they never wear white coloured clothes like 'dhoties' "unwashed". They wash the white dhoti in the mud and then only wear it so that they do not easily attract tigers. They avoid such colours.

- *Demarcation and Orientation:*

Demarcation of orientation inside the forest is by naming the places by certain events, peculiar trees and geographical qualities. For instance:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Gali muride mara</i> | – “The tree where a spirit killed a person” |
| <i>Kodavana konda matti</i> | – “The elevated space where a kodava was killed” |
| <i>Āane niir halla</i> | – “Brooklet where elephants drink water” |

Orientation and locating:

The other important concept of orientational space for the community is *locating* the honey combs. They can locate the direction and the

probable size of honey comb just by watching the direction of the movement of honey bees. They can also know whether the bees are going back after collecting honey or are going to collect honey. This concept has been incorporated in their folk song.

Jeene nii baroodu ondee daari
Honey bee you coming one direction

Nii hoogoddu dikkapaalu
You going any direction

While going to collect honey the bees go in a group
While coming back to the comb they come
Alone from any direction

Space and the Concept of Pollution

Pollution – The reasons

Pollution is another important concept in this community, which has a direct bearing on their day-to-day activities and the arrangement of space to avoid pollution. Pollution can occur to them due to various reasons:

1. When a girl attains puberty, she is considered polluted. She cannot stay inside the living hut. A separate hut constructed for this purpose serves as a pollution hut. The moment ladies come to know about the first menstruation, the girl is shifted to a hut called *palli* which is behind the dwelling huts; but close to the settlement. She is fed only by the girl who has already menstruated. She alone is eligible to gain an entry into that hut. The girl has to stay there for four to six weeks.
2. When a woman is pregnant, right from her third month of conception, she has to be away in a *palli*, the pollution hut. She can return to her hut only after giving birth to the child. No one other than an old lady of that settlement can enter the *palli*.
3. No one is allowed to die inside the hut. It is considered a bad omen. If any death occurs inside the hut, the whole hut is to be burnt. The body of an ailing person is shifted to another temporary pollution hut specially constructed for this purpose. After the death, the pollution hut is always burnt.

Trespassing the Territory and the Concept of Pollution.

Territory can be defined as an area of space which is bounded for a time in some discernible way and used by people. A territorial border, both

physical and conceptual is ordinarily respected by other members of the community. When this is trespassed, the trespasser is liable for punishment:

1. When a person who does not belong to a family, enters the hut, it is considered as trespassing the norm. The person is courtmarshalled in public by the head-man of the settlement and he is punished according to the established conventions.
2. A man who does not belong to the community enters the prescribed territory in hillock boundary of the settlement is viewed seriously and the punishment may go upto beating him and sometimes a fine is imposed for the act. In such cases the whole settlement is considered as polluted and it is to be purified by the 'priest'.
3. The whole settlement is considered polluted due to the entry of an *evil spirit*. The priest usually after the construction of the settlement, draws a *conceptual boundary* around the settlement and performs 'puja', the worship. As a result, it is believed that no evil spirit can trespass that boundary. If the people get any epidemic disease, it is believed that they have earned the wrath of the evil spirit: this is the indication of evil spirit trespassing the boundary. All the people of the settlement, with the help of the *shaman*, through rituals try to drive the evil spirit out of boundary. If they fail to do so, they burn the whole settlement and construct a new one.
4. Even the forest is divided by the people of the different settlements and they cannot go in search of food and the forest products, crossing the territory.

F – Formation system or face to face interaction: kinesics

As in any social encounter, Jenu Kurubas also group themselves in clusters, lines and circles. This formation may be termed as F – Formation. This activity is always performed in relation to the space between the individual of the group. F-Formation arises whenever two or more people sustain a spatial and orientational relationship in which the space between them is one to which they have equal, direct and exclusive access (Kendon 1977). This F-formation helps us understand the means by which the behaviours of community is organized in Face-to-Face interaction. This activity is always located in terms of its space.

F-formation between two individuals

Insider to the hut: Husband and wife are not supposed to sit side by side in the presence of children. Wife has to turn her waist and face the other

side and talk either while sitting or standing. While walking outside the settlement the wife has to walk behind the husband maintaining 4 to 5 feet distance.

Mother-Daughter : They can sit close by with folded legs side by side. Daughter can put her folded leg on the thigh of her mother.

Father-Son : Grown up son is not supposed to sit in front of his father face-to-face. He has to sit side ways. He cannot see eye to eye with his father.

Son-Daughter : They are not supposed to touch each other, but they can sit opposite to each other. They are not supposed to sit in a single row.

Father-in-law - Daughter-in-law: They are not supposed to stand face-to-face. The daughter-in-law, if it is in open space, stands up soon after *she* sees her father-in-law and turns her trunk and neck either to the side ways or completely turn her back. In case *mother-in-law* and *son-in-law* meet, the mother-in-law turns her body and neck and speaks.

Outside the Hut-Near the Fire Pit: Kinesics (litigation)

During the process of litigation it is observed that boys leave some space when they sit around, when compared to girls. Girls sit very close to each other even without leaving any gap. The accused person cannot stand within 3 feet in front of the head-man.

At the time of litigation if women are present they sit in a separate group leaving 5-10 feet distance from men folk.

At the time of any ritual, men and women sit in a circle. Half of the circle is covered by men, the other half by women. Anybody can see the *shaman*, but the *shaman* is not supposed to see any one. He cannot address any one in particular. He always raises his neck to look to the sky and speak only to the spirit. The physical and psychological difference in age, sex merges at the time of *kent-puje-phallus* worship (for details see Ritualistic Space of this paper).

Outsider to the settlement : Women have to turn their trunk and face to the other side when they come across a stranger or outsider to the settlement however less space is allowed by the path.

This is how the spatial behaviour of touching kinesics, visual behaviour, non-verbal behaviour works out in the community. To sum up this part, the physical distribution of space works out as an essential element of the metalanguage of Jenu Kuruba culture that can be

described thus. The spatial boundary is determined by the dimensionality of the space it delimits, various kinds of spatial boundaries in Jenu Kuruba cultural model. The physical, social and psychological spatial concepts are constructed in this society. The various types of structures of sign system are modelled on the spatial behaviour of Jenu Kuruba community.

Ritualistic and Mythological Space

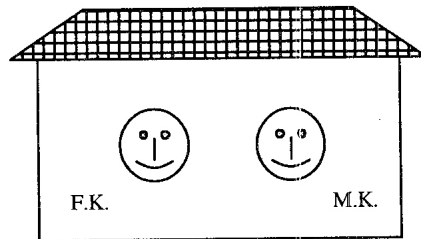
Ritualistic Space:

Ritualistic space is an important space conceived in this community. The fire pit, which is a central place of many mundane activities is metaphorically shifted to a ritualistic space.

Space at the time of kont puje (phallus worship)

This is an important ritualistic space created at the time of a festival called kont puja, the phallus worship. This festival is performed once in a year during the month of April-May.

Space in the context of this ritual, is not distinguished from its surroundings by visible marker; but has an ever shifting relationship of proximity and distance between the individuals, and thus has an intimate distance. This ritual is also performed in a circle. Dieties of male and female kontis form the sitting arrangement. Following is the pattern:



O.M.

M.M.

U.M.

Boys

O.W.

M.W.

U.W.

Girls

F.K. = Female Kont

M.K. = Male Kont

O.M. = Old Men

M.M. = Married Men

U.M. = Unmarried Men

O.W. = Old Women

M.W. Married Women

U.W. Unmarried Women

Usually, the women who chant folk 'hymns' sit near the male konti, next sit the elderly women and girls covering half of the circle. The men folk also sit in the same hierarchy starting from female konti side and leave an empty space and the conventional distance is created signalling the boundary between the acting area, potentially fillable: visually and accoustically. Thus they maintain a sort of male-female, old-young, married-unmarried oppositions before the commencement of the ritual. This is a sort of distancing the people based on psychological factors also.

Ritual : The oppositions

In this ritualistic play one can find the following types of oppositions in the spatial arrangement:

- *Space and Sex*
 - (a) Male konti – Female konti
 - (b) Male konti – Female audience
 - (c) Female konti – Male audience
- *Opposition in age and sex*
 - (a) Folk hymn singers female - married aged women - married young women - unmarried girls - children (girls).
 - (b) Priest - aged men - married men - unmarried boys – children (boys).

Merger of the oppositions

During the performance of the ritualistic action, the role of an actor and spectator starts exchanging. A spectator can take the role of an actor in the subsequent scenes. There can be an actor/spectator involvement in due course of dialogue exchange. A spectator can involve in providing cues to act according to the situation. He/she can join the actors at a particular juncture. Thus the actor-spectator distinction is merged. They can sit anywhere in the circle after their performance. The physical space is mixed up irrespective of age and sex and ultimately all distinctions disappear. Thus both the physical and mental distance in terms of opposition is eliminated. The social distance between father-in-law : daughter-in-law, mother-in-law : son-in-law, insider : outsider distinctions come to a naught. The act of sexual intercourse is performed irrespective of age and sex of the community (For details see Narayan 1989).

Mythological space

Mythological space is a conceptual universe created in the minds of the people of this society. There are certain rituals to traverse the mythological space. Fire pit in the center of the settlement functions as a *ritualistic center*. The *shaman* who sits beside the fire pit forms a circle by pouring water. People have to assemble outside the marked circle. This ritual of 'inviting spirit' "*gali kareyoodu*" *inviting wind/spirit* is performed to route out the evil spirit that may cause both physical and mental illness to a person or to the people of the settlement. The spirit can cause even many general problems which may be individualistic or social in character. *Shaman* acts, while traversing the world of the holy spirit, as an agent to call the evil spirit from the *world of the spirit* and asks the reasons for troubling the person or persons. At the same time he invites the holy spirit to drive out the evil spirit from the body of the patient. These are three worlds in the mythological universe of Jenu Kurubas: (1) the earthly world, (2) the world of the evil spirit, and (3) world of the holy spirit.

Arrangement of space : Shaman Act

The ritualistic activity of *shaman* act takes place around the fire pit. The *shaman* and the patient sit inside the circle in opposition to each other. Two to three women who sing the chorus (*sollu*) to invite the spirit sit behind the *shaman*. The people around the circle do not move when the *shaman* starts inviting the evil spirit. Only one person, who has to supply the required materials like beetle leaves, banana, coconut etc., can move according to the instructions of the *shaman*. Thus, the *ritualistic space* is sanctified and the ordinary space gets converted into a *ritualistic space* (for detail see Narayan 1989). From the beginning to the end of this *spirit-inviting ritual* the shaman and the people traverse in different world(s):

- *World of the spirit of the Dead/evil spirit*

The spirit of the dead or the evil spirit always traverses above the height of the head of the people in air. The world of the spirit is exactly the replica of the world of the Jenu Kurubas. Usually the spirit of the dead or the evil spirit is avoided to enter the settlement through certain rituals of invoking and inviting the 'holy spirit'. Thus, the spirit of the dead cannot cross certain boundary around the settlement. The holy spirit always protects the settlement by not allowing the spirit of the dead or evil spirit gaining entry into the

settlement. According to their belief, the spirit of the dead can only enter the body waiting for its kins to come outside the conceptual boundary of the settlement. It can enter only through the sole of the foot of a person. These spirits enter the body of the person only to get its due share. Sometime in the world of the spirit, there may not be, for instance, sufficient materials available for its use; or there may be some lapse on the part of a person not properly treating the spirit and thus the person gains the wrath of the evil spirit. With the help of a ritualistic act (see Narayan 1989), the *shaman* enters the *world of the spirit*. But, he has to still enter the *world of the holy spirit* to drive out the evil spirit.

- *The world of the Holy spirit*

The world of the holy spirit can be reached only by the *shaman* and not by the people. The world of the holy spirit is described by a *shaman* as:

As soon as I perform the act of inviting the holy spirit, my body gets terribly heated up. When the spirit actually 'comes' I attain trance. I travel to the world of holy spirit. I find a narrow path of light. I can see the distance upto Hunsur (20 kms). I travel in the path of light and cross 7 hillocks and 7 doors. There is a garden of Jasmine. I contact the spirit there and communicate with the spirit. The spirit sits on a white horse back and comes down with me.

Changing Scenario

The 1970s brought about drastic changes that altered forever the socio-economic-cultural life of the tribals. The construction of dams across the rivers Kabini (1972), Taraka (1971) and Nugu resulted in the displacement of the tribal communities living in the region. 80 tribal families were displaced during the construction of dams across Taraka, and 14 tribal hamlets were submerged with the dam across Kabini. There was also large scale acquiring of land by the state along with destruction of forest land. Some part of this land was given to non-tribal farmers as compensation, while no adequate re-habilitation measures have been implemented for the displaced tribals.

Together with this, strict Forest Laws were also passed. In 1963, the Karnataka Forest Act divided the forest land into Reserve Forest and Village forest. Later, with the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972, the Declaration of National Park in 1975 and in 1988, stringent laws against

trespassing of forest land were implemented. The law also ruled that tribals will no longer have access to the forests.

With this came the changing scenario which touched every aspect of the tribal life. The development programmes proposed and implemented by the Government, displayed a lack of understanding of tribal culture, and a certain callousness to their needs.

Housing system

The housing system initiated by the Government has totally ignored all traditional values of the tribal community. The indigenous housing concepts as explained earlier, is the very core of community life. There is a definite reason and meaning to the elliptical pattern of a tribal *hadi*. All this was negated when the state constructed row upon row of concrete houses for the tribals.

Now, to begin with, the tribal huts are built of bamboo and grass. They feel a kind of emotional alienation towards these concrete structures. Moreover, earlier, every tribal village was elliptical in shape with a fire-pit right in the centre. This fire-pit was symbolic of the close-knit community living of the tribals. It was the place where people gathered in the event of some important communication, this was where that food was roasted and shared and this was the spot around which people slept in the nights.

But, when the village became rows of houses, each family began to be alienated from the other. Now, each family has its own fire. There is a shift from the holistic to the individual approach.

Earlier, the tribal hamlet was a symbol of security, with the concept of a womb. It was also a safe heaven, clearly demarcating the outsiders from those of the community. It had well defined rules to be observed by the outsiders as well as by the community members. For instance, outsiders were not allowed to simply enter the hamlet, but had to undergo a certain ritualistic process. Moreover, there used to be a separate hut for the guests to stay in. Now any stranger can enter the *hadi* unannounced. In fact, the Government officials do so regularly almost as a matter of right, since it is they who have built the houses for the tribals. No foot-wear was permitted inside the *hadi*. Now slippers, shoes, boots are worn by outsiders who freely enter the hamlet, so much so, that any foot-wear is seen by the tribals as a symbol of domination or intrusion.

Moreover, these new houses constructed are not ritualized to keep away the evil spirits. Hence the tribals believe that these structures may collapse on their heads. Therefore, in some of the *hadis* like Bhimanahalli, Penjahalli and Balle, they are using these houses as cattle sheds, while they live in the huts they make.

This is also because the concept of space within the house is also violated. The concrete houses consist of one single room with a corner to be used as a kitchen. There is no place for a bamboo curtain to separate the living room from the kitchen, nor is there a bamboo pole to hang mugs and other utensils. The hearth which used to occupy the centre of the kitchen is now in one corner of the house. Even the head-zone and foot-zone cannot be adhered to because of the style the concrete structures are built.

In addition to all this, the straight line construction of the village has changed the power relationship between the Yajamana and the community. The Yajamana was the head of the tribal community and used to be seen as a person who would uphold the tribal customs and values. In the present context however, the Yajamana has lost that significance. He is also often ignored in the decision-making process. Since it is the Government that is now in control of the resources on which the tribal community is compelled to depend upon, the Yajamana is not quite the authority. The younger generation in particular is gravitating towards the power structure created by the outer world, thus giving less importance to their traditional leadership. Moreover, the intermixing of clans after displacement has also affected the Yajamana system. Another major contributory factor to the disintegrating tribal social life is the alienation of the tribals from the forests they have lived in.

Alienation from the Environment

The tribals have always been part of the eco-system of the forest. They should not be seen as intruders into the forests.

If the life-style of the Jenu Kurubas is carefully studied, it reveals that these tribals believe in co-existing with all other inhabitants of the forests. Contrary to the popularly held belief, the tribals do not want to destroy the jungles. There is now an increasing realization that it is the commercialization of the forest product that is resulting in large-scale destruction of the forests.

The tribals are in fact very conscious of what they take from the forests; are always concerned with putting something back. For instance, when they pick edible roots, they do not gather every tuber in sight, but leave a couple of them behind. The tribals do not store anything, and therefore they simply collect just enough for the present. This prevents wastage. The Jenu Kurubas used to practice shifting cultivations. But the crops would be grown only in between the trees, so that both the crops and the vegetation would thrive. These were never cut for building huts, or for fire or for any other purpose. For the huts, old, almost dried out bamboo is used. Only dry small animals like the rat and the squirrel are eaten. Even then, a small rat if caught, is set free again, for these gentle folk believe that it has not yet lived life to the full, it therefore should not be killed yet.

The tribals have a complete knowledge of the forests. They can identify, different varieties of trees and its uses, they have developed their own system of healing using medicinal herbs--, they are familiar with the behaviour patterns of animals. The tribals have developed their own technique for survival in the forests. Their method of containing a forest fire is adopted by the forest department. There are many such characteristics that speak of the relationship of the tribals with the forests.

After displacement, the tribals have been compelled to leave the forests and settle down closer to the non-tribals. This has brought a host of related changes in the tribal situation. In this process, the tribals lost their *Jammas*. *Jammas* had their own deities like Balle, Odathi, Karadihallada Devaru etc. Now as the religious influence like Shaivism of Lingayats and Vaishnavism of Brahmins is increasing, the tribals have incorporated in their worship the idols of Madheshwara Swami, Venkateshwara Swami and other Gods. But their psychological dilemma has increased. They have not been able to wholly accept non-tribal Gods and neither have they been able to completely adhere to their traditional worship.

Their economic vulnerability has led them to dire poverty. Since they have no access to the forests, they have been unable to survive well. There have been many starvation deaths. The tribal population in H.D. Kote decreased from 20,000 in 1973, to 15,000 in 1990. Starvation deaths, infectious diseases like sickle cell anemia and other killer diseases have been the main causes for a high mortality rate.

Displacement has also resulted in inter-mixing of clans. This has brought about a disintegration of the social life. There is a change in the world view of the tribals. Even the world of the dead is now bureaucratized with the mention of "servants". This inequality did not earlier exist in the tribal social milieu. There is also a mythological shift from a pure world to a polluted world.

Likewise their concept of pollution has also changed. For instance, there is no longer a separate hut for a girl who has attained puberty, or for a pregnant woman. The respectful distance maintained between father-in-law and daughter-in-law and the son-in-law and mother-in-law does not remain as before. There is now a face-to-face interaction. Elders do not occupy a position of respect and authority that they used earlier. In short, the whole of the tribal social cultural milieu has undergone a tremendous change. The tribals are now struggling to survive - the end of living and the beginning of survival.

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The Art of Living^{*}

Maharaj Krishen Kaw

When we speak of the art of living, what do we mean? Most of us go through life blindfolded, having no idea of what life is all about, nor caring to know. We are too busy in the multifarious petty pastimes in which we engage ourselves, to bother about the larger questions.

I would request you to place yourself in a receptive frame of mind. Do not be hasty in dismissing what I am saying as ordinary, already known, nothing new, idealistic, hypocritical and so on. Do not judge. Just receive. And think about it. Let us start with the basics. I am going to make a number of statements, without proof or argument. But I am convinced about their veracity as all these have been tested on the anvil of experience.

The absolute truth about the universe is that nobody knows what it is really like, how it started, where it is going and what is the purpose of it all. In my view, the closest that anyone has come to description, is that it exists, it is aware and it is of the nature of bliss.

I believe that the total reality is like an ocean that has always been existence, awareness and bliss. It has been an unbroken ocean, it is an unbroken ocean and it will remain so. In that absolute sense, there has been no transformation of the total reality and, therefore, there is no creation or destruction. Let us name this total reality as **God**.

Viewed, however, from the standpoint of a drop, which is what all of us individually are, each drop is part of small ripple, the ripple is part of a wave, the wave is part of a large mass of water and so on.¹ Ripples, waves and large masses of water do rise and fall. And, therefore, from our relative point of view, creation and destruction are realities.

From the relative point of view, there are two movements of each wave. It rises and it falls. Similarly, one could argue that God first involves Himself in matter and matter then evolves into God. There is a process of involution and then a process of evolution.¹

^{*} A Modified version of Amit Chaudhary Memorial Lecture delivered at IIT, Delhi on April, 2000.

¹ Currently, this wave which we call our universe, is passing through the stage of evolution when matter is trying to evolve into God. The story of its evolution from

Each of us has first to realize that he is just a drop. The best way of learning humility and a sense of perspective is to read a book on astronomy. When you realize how big this universe is, how tiny our galaxy is in the universe, how minuscule our solar system is in our galaxy, how insignificant the Earth is with respect to the Solar System and how utterly and totally irrelevant is the individual human being compared to the Earth – then you realize that you really do not matter at all.

Yet, if you come to this conclusion, you cannot commit a bigger blunder. Because the beauty of the whole arrangement is that nothing in this universe is insignificant. The whole depends on the parts. And even if one part, howsoever small, acts in a certain manner, the entire universe is affected thereby.

So, this is the first large generalization about life. God is unknowable, but his nature is existence, awareness and bliss. God has first involved himself into matter. Now matter is evolving into God. Man is part of that process. Each one of us is part of that process. We have to evolve from Man to God. This is the movement of the universe and our movement has to be congruent with it. This is the goal and purpose of our life. This is our Mission Statement.

The first step is when we understand that this is our mission. The second step is when we understand how the mission is to be fulfilled.

What is matter and what is God? Everything is composed of three elements. Everything **exists**. Everything **is aware**. Everything **is in bliss**. These are the common elements. What then is the difference between matter and God? The difference lies in the extent to which these elements are expressed. In a stone, for example, these elements are in existence at a minimum level, close to nil. In all conceptualizations of God these elements exist in the fullest form. Man is somewhere in between.

So, one is saying that man has to become God, one means that the quality of his existence, the quality of his awareness and the quality of his bliss should be of the highest level. How do we improve this quality?

This is where an analysis of **levels of awareness** comes in handy. For facility of understanding, we divide these into five levels. The first

matter to life and then to Man is well known. We are now in the phase when Monkey-Man is trying to become Man-God, so that he finally becomes God.

is the *unconscious* level. This is the grossest possible stage, where man is involved with goods, material objects and his primary goal in life is to 'collect' these objects. These are things, material possessions, what we call wealth. Here we exercise the **faculty of possessing**.

The second level is the *subconscious* where we deal with energy and our primary goal becomes the acquisition of 'power over other men'. Here we exercise the **faculty of controlling**.

The third level is the *uni-conscious*, where we deal with emotion and our primary goal is beauty. Here we exercise the **faculty of creating**.

The fourth is the *conscious* level, where we deal with intellect and our primary goal is truth. Here we exercise the **faculty of thinking**.

The last level is the *superconscious*, where we deal with the soul and our primary goal is bliss. Here we exercise the **faculty of being**.

To put it rather simply, a businessman acts at the unconscious level, a politician at the subconscious level, a poet at the unconscious level, a philosopher at the conscious level and a saint at the superconscious level.

Therefore, our strategy should be to raise our level of awareness through these five levels from the unconscious to the superconscious. How is this to be done?

There are many ways of raising one's level of awareness. The first method is through a change in our response towards work. We can have many different approaches to work. There is this well-known story: There were some people breaking stones by the wayside. A stranger happened to pass that way. He asked the first man what he was doing. The man glared angrily at him: "Are you blind? Can't you see that I am breaking stones?" He asked the second man. He looked at him casually and said: "What else? Earning my daily bread". The third man was breaking stones as if he was playing the piano. He was humming under his breath. When asked what he was doing, he smiled and said, "I am building a temple for God".

How many of us feel that way about our office work? We look at it as if it is a burden, an imposition, a dull, insipid way of earning our livelihood. There are a few who take work as an opportunity, a challenge. They can do something for their fellowmen, for the country, for humanity at large. It is true that they are paid for it. But that is not necessarily the main motivation. They work because they like to work, because they know that all work is for God.

The second method of raising one's level of awareness is through knowledge. What we are doing here today is using the method of knowledge. You look at life, at reality, at human beings, at all the scientific and religious theories and you try to relate these to one another. There is no doubt that each science discovers truth, but each one uncovers one aspect of the total. It is, only when you have the vision that can synthesize the truths of physics with those of metaphysics that you can get even a glimpse of the larger picture. Knowledge liberates.

Here, I would like to tell you about a few half-truths that science teaches. Most of us are enmeshed in them and are, therefore, unable to see the larger picture.

It is not true that only science can discover truth. There are other paths to truth. For example, intuition can lead you to truth.

It is not true that you have to measure everything through your physical senses or scientific instruments, which are the extensions of those senses, and anything not so measurable does not exist. Love cannot be measured, but it is the greatest reality in the universe.

It is not true that things happen by accident. There is a programme for this universe and there are programmes in every gene, in every seed. Nothing that has happened could have happened any other way.

It is not true that you cannot predict the future. In fact, future is lying in the seeds of the past, and anyone with vision can predict it.

It is not true that this is our only life. The individual soul travels through millions of bodies before it is finally liberated.

There is no point in carrying on like this further. In brief, we have to remember that science is just a preliminary attempt at unearthing the secrets of the world. When we explore the human mind, we discover a totally different cosmos. When we explore the human soul, we discover a wholly unfamiliar universe. These discoveries are still in the womb of the future, although a few scientists of consciousness have already appeared in the past.

Do not succumb to the bigotry of science. Keep your mind open to folk-beliefs and folk-lore of all hues. If someone tells you that a saint looked at him and he was cured of cancer, don't disbelieve him. If a heavy stone rises in the air when lifted by the little fingers of eleven devotees, don't be stupefied. If a lady ties a knot to a temple tree and gets a child, don't be befogged. These are not miracles. These are uncharted territories. Just tell yourself: May be! Could be! There seems to be a mystery here. Let me explore it!

The third method is that of quietening and cleansing the mind, often practised by different faith. It can be done by fasting, by continence, by looking constantly at a flame or a photograph, by listening to a certain patterns of sounds-audibly or mentally, or by watching your own breath, and so on. The technique is to see, feel or hear something **gross** that can be easily seen, felt or heard, and gradually to make it subtler and subtler, so that the mind is in its pursuit of the image, and so that sound or feeling becomes subtler and subtler till it quietens down completely. It becomes like a sky which is blue and cloudless, and where birds can fly with full freedom. The ideal state of the mind is a vacuum, in which thoughts arise and vanish with full freedom. You neither welcome them nor deny them access. You are not attached to them nor do you feel revolted by them. You let them be and see them rise and fall, as you see other objects outside you rise and fall.

Thus, the several sections of the mind – the id, the ego and the superego – which are treated as externalities and you identify yourself with the underlying substratum of the mind – the witness – the sky – that element within you which partakes of the qualities of pure existence, pure awareness and pure bliss – your soul, which is your highest reality and your true self.

It is strange but true that if you follow any of the three paths – the path of work, the path of knowledge or the path of quietening the mind – the results are the same. You become a quieter person, more sedate, more at peace with yourself, more positive, more contented, more compassionate, more considerate, and so on. You are less aggressive, less ambitious, less greedy, less lustful, less angry, less egotistic and so on. You are so full of the joy of self that you do not need any artificial stimulants like liquor, tobacco, drugs and the like. You are so full of brotherly feeling towards the rest of creation that you cannot even imagine devouring another form of life merely to sustain yourself.

Gradually, you realize that life is a razor's edge. The path that you have to follow is a narrow one. It is like trying to walk on the ridges of a hill. If you fall from the ridge, you can fall into a gorge on either side.

Thus, in the matter of eating, you have neither to starve yourself nor gorge yourself. There is a razor's edge where you eat the right quantity, the right stuff, the right calories, the right vitamins, the right cholesterol.

In the matter of talking, you are neither a Trappist monk with a vow of silence nor a silly chatterbox. Your voice is reasonably strong, your pitch is well modulated, you are loud enough to be heard, you

Speak well of others, you do not spread rumours or backbite. Above all, you speak when the act of speaking improves on the silence.

Thus, in regard to all departments of life you do not tend to extremes, but remain a moderate, you tread the middle path - **the majjhima nikāya** – the reasonable path.

In order to do so, you have to be alert. Because if you lack alertness even for second, you will not be mindful and you will deviate from the middle path.

This alertness means that you have to live in the present moment. When you are shaving, you are only shaving. Then the shave will be perfect. It will not be uneven. You will not cut or nick yourself. You will watch the razor. You will make all the movements perfectly. There will not be any mistake.

When you are eating, you eat. You see what you are eating. You do not talk. Then you masticate the food properly. You have a mind at rest. Then the food is digested properly. You eat the food at the proper pace. Then you eat a moderate quantity. If you are with the process of eating, you will neither be obese, nor suffer from digestive disorders. There will not be any deficiency in your system.

So it is all activities. If you remain fully immersed in each activity, you will always remain on the middle path. You will not commit follies or indiscretions. You will not annoy other people. You will not fight with others. You will be at peace with yourself and the world.

This means we have to live in the present moment all the time. Not in the past, which is dead, not in the future which is still to come. We are neither to ruminate over the past nor fantasize about the future. By remaining in the present moment, we take all the correct decisions. We are most efficient. We move towards perfection.

Living in the present requires a high state of alertness. In this state, you notice everything outside you – the sky, the earth, the trees, the birds, the clouds, the weather, the people, the clothes, the shops, all the externalities. More importantly, you also notice everything inside yourself – the thoughts arising every moment in the mind, how you are reacting to others, how anger is rising, how lust is rising, how greed is rising. You see these processes as they start taking place, at their source.

And there is a strange phenomenon that when you become aware of your mind, your mind ceases to react. It ceases to generate the negativities. The evil impulses get nipped in the bud. The light of your reason illuminates the mind and in that bright light, the forces of darkness cannot survive. This alertness makes you a good person.

As you become more and more alert, more and more mindful, more and more in the present moment, you start identifying yourself with him who is the witness in your mind, the one who is alert, the one who is mindful, the one who is in the present moment. He is the higher self. He is the **atman**. He is the conscience. He is God.

And one day, you become God.

Lamentations and Celebrations

Udaya Narayana Singh

I

One often hears this grumble that there has not been a *Pure Folklore Studies*, like Pure Mathematics. I have often asked myself as to why was it that in our long tradition, no one has talked about an autonomous discipline of Folklore. It was once considered to be a part of literary studies where it has had the same fate which it had to suffer later at the hand of linguists. There have been linguists who tried to subsume it (or, rather consume it) under the broad discipline of language sciences. The anthropologists, too, behaved in a similar fashion, as stated by Handoo (2000: 7) in the following words:

...each discipline armed with the imperialistic concept of annexing as much as possible, began trying to bring the other discipline under its own umbrella... Similarly, when non-literary artefacts of cultures were studied by folklorists, anthropologists behaved exactly in the manner, scholars of literature had in the case of studies carried on text-based folk literature

There have been, however, saner voices willing to view this enterprise in two-fold manner – first, as an inter-disciplinary endeavour – where each participating discipline sheds the apparently pristine requirement of purity, and then, at the same time, as a discipline in its own right. In this context, I recall having stated elsewhere that language and purity do not go together. And since the essential ingredient of folklore happens to be language, this applies to folklore as well. It is not surprising, therefore, that prevarication must be an ingrained characteristic of our folk-knowledge and folk-expression systems. Consequently, all our *real* productions and reproductions vis-à-vis language are instances of ‘double articulation’ – twice removed from what could have been *ideal*.

In fact, for any lore or myth, it is this apparent removal from reality that adds colour to what one says or does with language – even when a given text is not so pretentious so as to be scoring a point or sending a message. Our folk-narratives, or folk-drama, or our folk-

poetry cannot be a mere mirror of reality. And yet, they draw heavily from our context, our environ and our vision of space and time.

For that matter, even when we talk about apparently more respectable modes of text-generation in different genres which also reflect our life and living – the imprint of a folklore on them is often undeniable. Whether in the journalistic writing or programmes in the mass media, the same creative uncertainty (= the same prevarication?) gets reflected. No wonder then that what we are expected to do scientifically under oath of honesty and truthfulness is not what we actually do whether we stand as witnesses or when we stand on judgement on others, because there is this general uncertainty in all instances of *speech*. It is from this uncertainty, the removal from reality, and this double-articulation that all modern folklore flows and enriches our existence.

II

Myths as ensconced in folk-texts, as we all know, perform different functions. But in addition, they play a critical role in how a culture constructs its sense of time. They are distinguished from other forms of popular, often orally transmitted, literature. Some may like to classify this kind of literature according to its functions: *fables*, which instruct; *etiological tales*, which explain; and *folktales*, which entertain. According to some other scholars, myths are contrasted to both history, which concerns recent and well-documented events, and to poetic epics and narrative legends, which deal with historically important person, place, or with incidents from the distant past. Take for example, the story of Lady Godiva's naked ride through Coventry, as in the saga in the legends of Norwegian and Icelandic kings (recorded during 12th to 15th century). Folklores, however, often tell us stories that are situated in an imagined, remote, timeless past and dwell on themes such as the origin of living beings and the supernatural. This fine distinction between folklores on the one hand and epics and legends on the other, is not often easily made.

In all fairness, about myths, one must admit here that they have enriched the western literature since the time of Aeschylus and have been used by many major English poets such as Milton, Shelley, and Keats. The influence of Puranic stories on playwrights and authors of *kaavyas* in the Indian tradition is also well-known and documented. Interestingly, many literary greats, especially William Blake, Franz

Kafka, Tagore, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Borges have consciously and continuously created and constructed new myths, sometimes using the old materials and newly constructed symbols.

Studies of the folklore and folk-legends of North and South American natives, Australian aborigines, the peoples of South Africa, and others have revealed how widespread have our mythological elements and motifs been. As we all know, many themes and motifs recur in various cultures and ages, the commonest being the myths of the creation of the world. The origin myths begin from the story of a god fashioning the earth from an abstract chaos to a specific animal, and take us to the one where god is seen as creating it from a handful of mud. Other origin stories refer to cyclical creation and destruction, in parallel with never-ending seasons of birth, death and rebirth. In Greece, the concern with renewed fertility was seasonal. Certain other cultures, such as that of the Mesopotamians, focussed on longer periods of vegetative death through prolonged drought. Another well-known idea is that of a golden age in which humanity is viewed as having degenerated from an earlier perfection. Hesiod's Golden Age and the Garden of Eden in Jewish and Christian tradition are examples. Then, the flood motif is extremely widespread too, and this group of myths also lead us to other myths treating the origin of fire, or its retrieval from someone who has stolen it. The relation between the living and the dead is another common theme.

III

There have been many theories as to the reasons for similarities among beliefs, lores and myths of such diverse peoples. In other words, could there be *folkloristic universals*? Many have, however, viewed them as poor reflections of history, and have attempted to analyse them in non-sacred ways to account for their apparent absurdity. Such opinions have been expressed in all ages. For instance, the Greeks explained myths as allegories, and looked for a reality concealed in poetic images. Theagenes of Rhegium (6th c. B.C.) was an early supporter of this interpretation which was later developed by the Stoics, who reduced the Greek gods to mere moral principles and natural elements. Euhemerus, for instance, considered the gods to have been renowned historical figures who became deified through the passage of time. The animists see myths as developing from an improper separation between the human and nonhuman.

A later allegorical interpretation claims that at one time myths were invented by wise men to point out a truth, but that after a time myths were taken literally. One example of this can be seen in the myth involving *Kronos*, who devoured his children. Kronos is the Greek word for time, which is said to destroy whatever it brings into existence. The philologists like Max Müller, on the other hand, saw myths evolving out of corruptions of language. There is a similar theory that myths, including scripture, are corruptions of history.

The great modern advances in the study of the folk and the myths began in the 19th century, when scholars like Sir James Frazer and Sir Edward Burnett Tylor argued for the study of mythology and folklore not as bad histories but as social institutions, and called attention to the myths of contemporary simple societies. The coinage of a name for the discipline of 'folklore', however, had to wait until August 1846 when William Thoms used it in a communication to fellow scholar and editor, as reported by Alan Dundes (1965).

Today the initial evolutionary theories of Frazer and Tylor may be discredited as simplistic and ethnocentric. The current theories instead posit a common psychological or emotional basis and relate these narratives to universal religious impulses. In *The Golden Bough* (1890), Frazer had argued that all mythical narratives were originally connected with the idea of fertility in nature, with the birth, death, and resurrection of vegetation as a constantly recurring motif. Psychoanalysts like Carl Jung believe that there is an inherent tendency in all people to form same or similar mythic symbols.

On the other hand, Indologists and religious scholar Mircea Eliade contend that myths are recited and reflected in lores where the main purpose is that of ritually recreating the beginning of *Time* when all things were initiated. This, he argued, allowed one to return to the original, and successful creative act. Sigmund Freud believed that the apparent irrationality of myths arises from the same source as what he called the disconnectedness of dream. He thought that they are both symbolic reflections of unconscious and repressed fears and anxieties which are universal aspects of the human condition, or which characterise distinct societies.

Most contemporary students of mythology and folklore, however, have turned away from attempts to explain similarities in content or the universalistic texts by calling attention to the different contexts in which these cultural texts occur. They believe that folklores function in a

variety of ways within a single culture as well as differ in function from one culture to another.

Malinowski considered all myths to be validations of established practices and institutions, whereas Claude Lévi-Strauss focussed on their formal properties. He pointed at the recurrence of certain kinds of structures in widely different traditions of folk literature, and took recourse to Saussurean binary opposites by highlighting oppositions such as nature/culture and self/other. He argues that the human brain organizes all perceptions in terms of contrasts and concludes that certain oppositions are universal. Further, he advocates the interpretation of these texts as culturally specific transformation of certain universal structures. From those days until the present postmodern times, a lot of innovative studies have enriched our general understanding of various aspects of cultururation, especially in the areas such as ethnomusicology, performing folk arts, folk customs and beliefs, and added newer dimensions to our understanding of folklore studies.

IV

To my mind, both folklore and linguistics share one major concern, namely, that of primacy of speech over writing. Let us not forget that Saussure himself had treated writing as a parasitic form, the representation of a representation. This may seem to some like a relatively innocent move, but in fact it was probably a part of the politics of theory-building that he had engaged in. Recall that he had warned us that linguists could "fall into the trap" of attending to written forms which could eventually "usurp the role" of speech. If writing was set aside as dependent and derivative, accounts of language could take as the norm the experience of hearing oneself speak, where form and meaning seemed given simultaneously.

In fact, the privileging of speech is not only a weighty matter, it is also very nearly inescapable. It is so because whether in linguistic analysis or in folklorist studies, and by extension, in semiotic analysis of any kind, everything depends upon the possibility of identifying signs, for which it is necessary to grasp or identify signifieds. It is, therefore, not an accident that semiotic theory should find itself implicated in phonocentrism and logocentrism. This is neither an accident nor an error as pointed out by Derrida in *Grammatology*:

The privilege of the phon has dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch, and has even produced the

idea of the world, the idea of world-origin, that arises from the difference between the worldly and the non-worldly, the outside and the inside, ideality and non-ideality, universal and non-universal, transcendental and empirical, etc. (1976: 7-8).

These are, of course, large claims. These new binary oppositions such as *outside/inside*, *transcendental/empirical*, etc., depend on a point of differentiation, and the claim is that the moment of speech, where *signifier* and *signified* seem given together, where inner and outer or physical and mental are for an instant perfectly fused, serves as the point of reference in relation to which all these distinctions are posited. Notice that Derrida – like Saussure – himself creates a chain of related but non-identical terms and concepts, including *differance*, *supplement*, *trace*, *hymen*, *espacement*, *greffe*, *pharmakon*, *parergon*. However, he would also like to prevent any of his terms from becoming "concepts" of a new science. In an interview on his positions in "Semiologie et grammatologie", he identified his double science or double reading not with a mode of discourse that would lie outside or beyond semiotics but with a special practice within semiotics. One can then say that in every semiotic proposition or system of research metaphysical presuppositions will cohabit with critical motifs by virtue of the fact that up to a certain point they inhabit the same language, or rather, the same system of language (Derrida 1972: 49-50).

Although Derrida's deconstruction reveals 'irrationalities' in our systems and theories, it is not a kind of 'new irrationalism', as is often suggested. It only reveals contradictions and paradoxes, which semiotics cannot escape. Generally, semiotics is not the self-consistent discourse of a science but is a discourse of a text. What deconstruction advises then is not a change of direction – but a shift from *semiotics* to a new discipline, namely, that of *grammatology*. Notice that in either case, there is no escape from textuality; one can only engage in it from a more critical viewpoint.

In 'Semiotics and deconstruction', a lecture delivered at the International Conference on the Semiotics of Art, sponsored by the University of Michigan, Jonathan Culler (1978, English trans., Cornell) observes that the importance of the present moment is that various traditional disciplines are now beginning to relate their own work to Semiotics. At the same time, Semiotics is facing an attack from traditional humanists, who are enraged about the fact that a discipline with scientific pretensions should claim to treat products of the human

spirit. There is, however, a more radical critique which focuses on the same point about scienticism. Take J. Hillis Miller's argument that there is a clear distinction between what might be called to conflate two terminologies, *Socratic* (theoretical, or **canny**) *critics* on the one hand, and *Apollonian/Dionysian* (tragic, or **uncanny**) critics, on the other.

The promise of a rational ordering of literary study based on advancements in Linguistics would see the first group, i.e. the canny critics would try to create a language sciences under a collective enterprise such as "the human sciences", penetrable by only one tool, namely, thought. It is not surprising if they literally follow what Nietzsche has said in this respect.

The *uncanny critics*, on the other hand, do not believe in the possibility of general and systematic theories, because they have discovered that by careful working through individual texts, whether literary or philosophical, one is led to unmasterable paradoxes, which refer to the domain of signification. This is often cited as a *post-structuralist* or *deconstructionist* attitude. But one could still ask these question: Are the proponents of semiotics "lulled by the promise of rational ordering"? Do we really have "unshakeable faith" in thought, rather than in the powerful interpretive account of linguistics and semiotics? Derrida's reading of Saussure in *De la grammatologie* is severely critical of the *logocentrism* of Western culture - the "metaphysics of presence" which texts simultaneously affirm and to undermine. Then there is the notion of meaning as something present to the consciousness of the speaker at the moment of utterance: What is it that the speaker "has in mind" as he speaks. Derrida is interested in the way in which this logocentrism is "deconstructed" in texts that affirm it. As a critique of logocentrism, Derrida argues that since Saussure defines language as a system of signs, the central question becomes that of the nature and identity of signs and their constituents - with a focus more precisely on their inter-relationship.

It may be mentioned here that the primacy of speech and thought over the written word had been realised by others, too. For instance, Nietzsche had an "unshakeable faith that thought, using the thread of logic, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being".

V

The dichotomy of the spoken versus the written is not new. What is new is the claim that has been independently voiced by many that writing is an act of 'double articulation'. Speech implies an intricate process of

selection of certain linguistic entities, appropriate to a given context or for an intended content, and their combination into linguistic units of a higher degree of complexity. The term 'Double Articulation' in the linguistics tradition suggests that 'speaking' (or 'organising' one's speech) involves organizing ourselves twice - once to create lexis from the basic speech units, i.e. sounds, and then again to create sentences from these words. This two-step process completes the cycle of signification, beginning its journey from symbols as signifiers (=sounds) and ending in a signified (=meaning).

At the point of textual construction, this 'duality of patterning' is readily apparent: the author selects words and combines them into sentences according to the syntactic system of the language he is using; sentences in their turn are combined into utterances. But here there are interesting questions that remain hidden. First, are the *oral texts* - which is what folklore is - subject to this 'double articulation'? In what way are they different from the written act of creativity? These are not easy questions and they do not have easy answers either. However, I would like to take a position that if we are to use the concept of *double articulation* from a text theoretic point of view (and not from a purely linguistic angle), folk texts are instances of an interesting paradox. They are products of *single articulation* that allow *plurality* to be reflected in the way the folk-texts are constructed and narrated, and also in the way they could be heard and understood or interpreted.

Secondly, and here is where the pressure of the mass bound by a common code or convention puts pressure on the folk narrators, because they are by no means completely free agents in their choice of words. Their selection of names and certain limited words and expressions would of course respond to the need for localising their texts (in a particular time and space), but their overall choice must be made from the lexical storehouse at the disposal of their culture with which they and their readers or addressees are familiar. Here, we have to assume that in the optimal exchange of information in a performance situation - whether it is a socio-cultural ritual or a bed-time story-telling event dominated by grandma's, the speaker and the listener have at their disposal more or less the same "filing cabinet of prefabricated representation": the addressee of a verbal message selects one of these "preconceived possibilities" and the addressee is supposed to make an identical choice from the same assembly of "possibilities already foreseen and provided for". Thus the efficiency of a speech event in case of a folk narration demands the use of a common code by its

participants, which is inherently characterized by the feature of 'single articulation'. At least, this should be largely so. In comparison, the author of written words is more free to practise a *grammatical and lexical violence*. That she can do it becomes a source of her cause for celebrations. That keeps her going.

Thirdly, in certain ways, writing relates the displaced speaker with the space she belongs to. I like the way Rajeev S. Patke (2001) describes this matter. Writing translates the diasporic into metaphor,. Patke argues, where the figure of the cusp can serve as a geometrical emblem. As metaphor, suggests Patke, the diasporic refers to a state of being in two minds about itself. Likewise, translation may also be said to be a thought in two minds about itself. Both are figures for gain-in-loss. Just as selves translate across environments, likewise, texts live in a diasporic relationship between languages. Both diaspora and translation here may be viewed as metaphors for poetry: firstly, because in a poem, senses migrate from the world of experience to the world of expressions, and secondly, because pastness, loss, negation, absence, and desire all get translated, where ideas, events, feelings and convictions travel from the memory into a trace of being which recovers a part from evanescence. That is why all poets are, in a sense, engaged in acts of translation, and every translation is a kind of migration, a lamenting recuperation of love.

Lamentations apart, it is interesting to note that notwithstanding the theoretical points of debate as outlined above, there are now attempts to blur the dividing lines between the spoken and the written word, the text and its translation, or even the folk-knowledge and the documented history. I would like to end this monologue in the first person with an instance of this kind of an attempt which could be seen in the narratives like *Zindagiinaamaa: Zindaa Rukh* – a fiction in Hindi by Krishna Sobti, published in 1979 (winning her the Akademi Award in 1980, and also the Sahitya Shiromani Award in 1980). The novel was a surprise to the Hindi literary world because of the author's shift to the genre of 'historical' fiction. I must mention here that Krishna Sobti's reading of history does not deal with rebellions. It does not project any radical solutions, but it does create a world where caste and religion are peripheral and where the divisions of the male and female territories are blurred even while the conventional roles are supported.

Like in *Zindagiinaamaa*, I could present scores of other writings – such as Satinath Bhaduri's *DhoRhaai Carit Maanas* or Amiyabhushan Majumdar's *Dukhiyaar Kuti*, both in Bengali (appearing in the fifties

and sixties) - where history is viewed not through cyclical patterns and archetypal characters but through folk traditions, rituals, ceremonies and marriage ties. In particular, in *Zindagiinaamaa*, feminine voices, maternal images, images of birth and nurturing and of continuity abound. The actual historical records are found to be irrelevant to the lives of the people by the author, and the historical processes stand reversed in their daily interaction with each other across barriers of castes and communities. The freedom which festivals and marriages provide for crossing these barriers is remarkable. Women voice their concern in different ways, prioritizing different issues: the oral takes over, and songs and ceremonies reflect this reality. They discuss war and peace, economic need, the British Raj, Victoria's reign, and the aggressiveness of the rulers. There is an earthiness about the narrative, a closeness to nature, a pride in the community.

Folk culture is seen here as a living tradition which knows no division - no difference of status. It is not a layered tradition which hierarchise and distance one set people from another. It rather has a levelling force which inculcates the feeling of solidarity. I would like to end my piece with what she began where she had prefaced her work with the following lines:

*History / what is not
And history / what it is
Not that
which is secured in
the royal archives with
date and time in the
chronicle

But that
which flows within the
consciousness of the people's mind
Flows, flourishes and spreads
and lives's in the
ordinary people*

(Translated by Jasbir Jain)

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